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PLAY IT AS IT LAYS

A Screenplay

By

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From the Novel by Joan Didion

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PLAY IT AS IT LAYS

FADE IN:

1 EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - DAY 1

Silence. A thousand square miles of empty desert, picked up by a HIGH CAMERA, PANNING almost imperceptibly.

The CAMERA PICKS UP a road through the desert, and stops. An open car comes INTO FRAME, driven very fast along the desert road. The driver is MARIA. She is aiming a gun at a road sign as she drives.

ANOTHER ANGLE

CLOSER, LOWER. Maria shooting at the back of the road signs as they flash by. We HEAR the ping of the bullets as they hit metal.

REVERSE ANGLE

The bullets hitting and piercing the signs. The CAMERA REVERSES AFTER EACH SHOT. There are four signs along this stretch of road. The first reads:

LOOSE GRAVEL

The second reads:

CHARLES BROWN HIGHWAY

The third:

WELCOME TO CALIFORNIA

And the fourth:

MAXIMUM SPEED LIMITS
Autos 65
All traffic 65
Trucks 60

CUT TO:

2 EXT. GARDEN - DAY 2

The sharp PING of the bullets gives way to the SOUND of birds, on the grounds to what appears to be a large estate on the subtropical California coast.

Maria walks the gravelled paths of a circular rose garden.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 2

She begins at the outermost perimeter and works inward, walking every path with a pointless absorption which begins finally to seem the slightest bit off, indefinably not quite appropriate.

In the middle of the last circle she stops, as if will herself to leave the pattern incomplete. She looks for a long while at a rock half-embedded in the path.

Then, with a kind of hynotic dread, she kicks the rock over. There is nothing beneath it but damp earth.

CUT TO:

3 A SERIES OF PSYCHIATRIC TEST CARDS - FULL SCREEN 3

The cards FLASH ON FULL SCREEN and for varying lengths of time. As the sequence gains speed the cards become uglier, more troubling. There are black-and-white line drawings, the "tell me a story" cards from the Thematic Apperception Test. There are blank inkblots from the Rorschach. And there are the disturbing four-color ink-blots from the Rorschach.

FLASHING through the last cards are odd distortions of actual images: a VERY CLOSE SHOT of a chrome garbage container snapping closed, a half-formed piece of human tissue in liquid.

Over this sequence is MARIA'S VOICE.

MARIA (v.o.)

I could tell you I saw a cock in that ink blot, but why? I could give you a lot of answers, but none of them apply.

Here are some typical questions. the doctors here ask me I am to answer yes or no. Do I think a large number of people are guilty of bad sexual conduct? Do I believe my sins are unpardonable? Have I been disappointed in love? How could I answer? How could it apply?

I'll tell you what I do. I try to live in the now. I watch hummingbirds. I go for a walk during visiting hours. I see no one I used to know, but then I'm not just crazy about a lot of people.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: 3

MARIA (v.o.) (cont'd)
I used to ask questions, and I got the answer. If Carter and Helene aren't careful they'll get the answer too.

On the last line of Maria's v.o. an IBM answer sheet from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory flashes on the screen.

ANOTHER ANGLE - MARIA

The CAMERA TRAVELS down Maria's arm to the black IBM pencil gripped in her hand.

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE PENCIL

The pencil point, full screen, scratches across the sheet the words, "NOTHING APPLIES."

CUT TO:

4 EXT. SUNSET STRIP - DAY 4

Maria driving. She picks an emery board from the dashboard and files one nail as she turns into the undergound garage of an office building.

CUT TO:

5 INT. GARAGE - DAY 5

Maria gets out of her car. As she walks by the attendant's stall, she picks up a half empty Coca-Cola bottle from the counter and places a tablet on her tongue. She swallows it with the leftover Coca-Cola.

CUT TO:

6 INT. 9255 SUNSET - DAY 6

Maria walks through the lobby of 9255 Sunset. She is on her way to the Aidikoff Screening Room. Two agents wait by the elevator with a client, a Sunset Strip type who might be the star of a television western. One of the agents recognizes Maria.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED: 6

AGENT
Maria. Say hi to Rick Lacey.
(to the actor)
Carter Lang's wife.

Maria keeps walking without a flicker of recognition. She enters the Aidikoff Screening Room. The actor regards her with sexual appreciation.

CUT TO:

7 INT. SCREENING ROOM - DAY 7

Maria sits down. There is only one other person in the room. BZ MENDENHALL. He is already seated, a few rows back and over from where Maria sits down. BZ regards the back of Maria's head for a moment.

BZ
I've got the room for a half hour and you show up fifteen minutes late.

Maria does not turn around.

MARIA
I was tied up in traffic.

BZ
A little early for a matinee.

MARIA
I don't do that anymore.

BZ
Carter will be happy.
(he picks up the telephone and speaks to the projectionist)
We're ready.

The lights go down. What appears on the screen is clearly an actress testing for a role. The slate identifies the director as "C. LANG" and the actress as "SUSANNAH WOOD -- TEST."

MARIA
Where's Carter?

(CONTINUED)

Still looking for locations (A beat)

7 CONTINUED: 7

BZ

The studio's trying to cut our points. I came in to raise the specter of private money.

MARIA

You don't want to use your own money.

BZ

You never have to use your own money you just have to mention it.

On the screen, Susannah Wood has a piece of needlepoint and is working it. She is concentrating intently on the needlepoint and cannot seem to think what to say. She catches her finger with the needle.

The screen test OVERLAPS the dialogue between BZ and Maria.

SUSANNAH

Let's see. I'm five-foot-six... my hair is natural... I've got a mole on my left thigh...

(she looks up)

I don't know what this test is supposed to prove.

From o.s. comes the voice of CARTER LANG.

CARTER (o.s.)

It's supposed to prove you've got something to offer besides a mole on your left thigh, Susannah.

Carter, his back to the CAMERA, appears on film and takes the needlepoint away from Susannah.

CARTER

It's also supposed to prove you can move on screen without props, so let's forget the needlepoint. Which you don't know how to do anyway.

Carter begins to do the needlepoint in an abstracted kind of way, staying on screen.

CARTER

(continuing)

What do you know how to do?

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED: (2) 7

SUSANNAH
(coming on sulky, a trace pouty)
I'm terrific in bed.

CARTER
That's very cute, but it's not a feature length motion picture.

BZ
You ever see her series?

No reaction from Maria.

BZ
Cancelled after 13 weeks.

Again no reaction from Maria.

On-screen, Susannah is beginning to be a little undone by Carter. She indicates the needlepoint, which he is still doing.

SUSANNAH
You don't think that's kind of an... odd thing for you to be doing?

CARTER
(very fast, trying to break through her mannerisms)
Odd? How? Tell me why you think it's odd?

SUSANNAH
I don't know... I mean, uh...

CARTER
You got a lot of doubts about male and female roles? That kind of thing make you a little anxious?

SUSANNAH
Not very.

CARTER
What does?

SUSANNAH
Not much.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED: (3) 7

CARTER
How about your first movie? That make you anxious?

SUSANNAH
Not very.

CARTER
I mean the dirty one. The porno. With you... and the fat gook... and the dog. The dog, that was a nice touch.

SUSANNAH
Where'd you see that?

CARTER
Your business manager showed it to me.

For the first time on screen Susannah's reaction and movements seem electric, entirely spontaneous.

SUSANNAH
What do you want from me?

Carter is pleased.

CARTER
That's what I want. Now act. From the top.

He disappears from the film leaving Susannah alone with the needlepoint.

BZ
I thought I'd change my credit on this one. "Produced by Benjamin Zimbalist Mendenhall." It's time I filled the screen with my card. It's time I earned the respect of my peers.

MARIA
Is he fucking her?

CUT TO:

8 EXT. MARIA'S POOL - DAY 8

Maria sits at the edge of the pool, her feet in the water. It is late day. A boy in white coveralls vacuums the far end of the pool.

BZ sits behind Maria, and idly throws the ice cubes from his finished drink into the pool.

BZ
I can't help admiring the way you reduced everything to its central element.

8 CONTINUED: 8

MARIA
Why did you want me to see that test?

BZ shrugs.

BZ
It's Thursday. The masseur doesn't come until four, I had a couple of hours to kill, I thought you'd be interested.

Maria reaches into the pool and pulls up a thermometer on a string. She looks at it, then calls to the boy vacuuming at the far end of the pool.

MARIA
Get it back up to eighty-five. It comes with the rent.

BZ
I don't know if you realize this, Maria, but Carter wanted to use you in this picture very badly. At one point, he told me to scrap the whole deal, just because he wanted to use you.

It's my his picture and he's still [illegible] insecure.

Maria throws the thermometer back in the pool and watches it sink. When she speaks her voice is flat.

MARIA
Let him use her for awhile.

BZ
All right, forget it. Erase the tape. Take two. You want to go to Larry Kulik's party tonight?

Maria does not look up. Her voice is still flat.

MARIA
Where's Helene?

BZ
Helene's in bed. Helene's depressed. Helen has these very copious menstruations.

MARIA
Larry Kulik's a gangster.

BZ
A lawyer.

8 CONTINUED: (2) 8

MARIA
For gangsters.

BZ
Honi soit qui mal y pense.
Anyway, he's a great admirer of yours. You know what he told Carter? 'What I like about your wife, Carter, is that she's not a cunt.'

CUT TO:

9 EXT. A PARTY - NIGHT 9

A pink tent. Chasen's chili. Maria stands on the lawn with BZ and LARRY KULIK, a middle-aged man who is suntanned, expensively dressed, habituated to power. Larry Kulik is desultorily stroking Maria's neck, but looking beyond her, at a very young girl dancing on the terrace.

LARRY
I said to myself, Kulik, you're going to die. And suddenly I got it. The whole meaning of life. It came to me in a blinding flash, right there on the table at Cedars.

MARIA
What was it?

Larry Kulik is not really listening. His eyes are on the girl dancing.

LARRY
(to BZ)
I'd like to get into that.
(to Maria)
What was that, babe?

BZ
I wouldn't call it the impossible dream.

MARIA
The whole meaning of life.

Larry Kulik is still stroking Maria's neck and still assessing the girl on the terrace.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: 9

LARRY
Not that many guys. Only six.
I had it researched.
(to Maria)
How's it going, babe? How's
Carter?

CUT TO:

10 INT. LITTLE JOE'S BARBER SHOP - DAY 10

FREDDY CHAIKIN, a well-tailored agent about 45, sits in a chair talking on the telephone. Other agents in other chairs talking.

FREDDY
Maria, baby, I didn't even know
you were in town. You didn't
leave a number, I just assumed
you were out looking for locations
with Carter.

A beat. Freddy in this call is very smoothly and very pleasantly shifting from the defensive to the offensive position.

FREDDY
(continuing)
He might have said something
about it, but I never listen
to Carter when he's thinking
about a new picture. And he
certainly didn't say anything
about your wanting to work
again.
(another beat)
Well, whether it's wanting to
work again or wanting to work
always, the fact is, when an
actress walks off a picture,
people get the idea she doesn't
want to work.

11 EXT. FREEWAY - DAY 11

Maria driving. The overhead signs near the interchange almost fill the screen as they flash by. The radio PLAYS hard rock. Maria concentrates on the beat and the freeway.

As one song is about to end she switches stations reflexively, picking up the same song in mid-phrase.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: 11

Over the action are the telephone voices of Maria and Freddy Chaikin.

MARIA (v.o.)
That was almost a year ago. I was sick. I was upset about Kate. I haven't walked off any more sets, you know that, Freddy.

FREDDY (v.o.)
You haven't had any sets to walk off.
(a pause)
Actually, I mentioned your name today at lunch, Maria. To Morty Landau. He's very interested in seeing some film.

MARIA (v.o.)
Seeing some film. Morty Landau makes television.

FREDDY (v.o.)
I don't think you can safely categorize a man who's had eight Emmys in two years, Maria.

MARIA (v.o.)
I think you can safely say he makes television, Freddy.

FREDDY (v.o.)
Let's get to the bottom line. I want to help you. I want to help you because I love you and I want to help you because I love Carter. But in order for me to help you...

On Freddy's last line Maria turns up the RADIO, drowning the V.O. In the same movement she picks up a hard-boiled egg from the passenger seat, cracks it on the steering wheel and begins to shell it without taking her eyes from the freeway.

CUT TO:

12 A FILM CLIP - FULL SCREEN 12

A New York brownstone apartment. The clip is very grainy, 16mm, blown up to 35mm, and it is in different proportion (aspect ratio) to the actual screen. A slightly younger Maria stands facing the camera. She has a microphone around her neck and seems bewildered by what she is doing.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: 12

There is a sense that she stands there only to indulge whoever is behind the camera.

MARIA
... And so that's who I am, Maria
Wyeth, and this is... well...
where I live. So to speak.

The title "MARIA" appears on the screen.

Maria looks doubtfully at whoever is behind the camera, then continues.

MARIA
(continuing)
I work as a... model. I get a
hundred dollars an hour from
the agencies and fifty from the
magazines. I...
(she is having
trouble think-
ing what to say)
... don't do showrooms. Right
now I need to get my weight up.
Everyone who used to book me
says I'm well, too thin.
Sometimes I... Ever since my
mother died I... well, I look
at a plate of food and I see a
rattlesnake. You know, coiled?

The title "A FILM BY CARTER LANG" appears across the screen.

Maria is still looking, puzzled, at whoever is behind the camera.

MARIA
(continuing)
Is this what you want? Carter?

CUT TO:

13 A CLIP FROM ANOTHER FILM - FULL SCREEN 13

Low-angle shot of a bike pack riding. The color is of a different register than the actual film. Maria rides with the president. ROAD MUSIC. There is a title over the action: ANGEL BEACH - A CARTER LANG FILM.

Maria is not speaking on screen, but her voice, apprehensive, not part of the film clip, cuts through the ROAD MUSIC.

14 CONTINUED: 14

MARIA
What for.

Carter seems suddenly to want to break through to Maria.

CARTER
Stop that.

MARIA
I mean I thought we were going
to be kind of separated.

CARTER
If that's what you want.

MARIA
It wasn't me. I mean, was it me?

CARTER
(wearily)
Never, Maria. Never you.

MARIA
I guess we could try.

CARTER
Only if you want to.

MARIA
(too forcefully)
Of course I do. Of course I want
to.

CARTER
Why don't you sound like it?

MARIA
Carter, I do.
(a pause)
Maybe it's not such a good idea.

Carter's tentative effort is over.

CARTER
Do what you want.

Carter gets up and walks across the lawn to the house. Maria watches the light go on upstairs. After a moment she walks barefoot to the house.

CUT TO:

15 EXT. MARIA'S LAWN - BACK CUT - DAY 15

Maria plays on the lawn with Kate, who is at this point two or three years old. Maria is throwing a ball to Kate, who is trying to catch it, unsuccessfully. The two of them are laughing ecstatically.

Carter stands apart, watching them from the terrace. Maria and Kate do not notice him.

CARTER
~~Does she need a sweater?~~ Watch out she doesn't get chilled

The moment is lost. Maria looks up toward Carter, walks across the lawn, picks up Kate's sweater. She returns to Kate and puts the sweater on her. Her voice is neutral.

MARIA
Kate.

Kate does not look up but Maria speaks as if she had.

MARIA
(continuing)
Your father wants to talk to you.

CUT TO:

16 INT. MARIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 16

Maria has just followed Carter in from the pool. She is still in her robe and barefoot. Carter lies on the bed, still dressed, staring at the ceiling. Only by an increased immobility does he acknowledge Maria's presence in the doorway.

MARIA
I saw Kate today.

Carter does not look at her.

CARTER
How many times you been out there lately?

MARIA
Hardly at all. Maybe a couple of times all month.

CARTER
You've been out there four times since Sunday.

Maria does not answer. She walks to the window and stands looking out toward the pool.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED: 16

CARTER
(continuing)
They called me.

MARIA
Of course they called you. You were the one who had her committed.

CARTER
Don't say that word.
(as if by rote)
They called to point out that unscheduled parental appearances tend to disturb the child's adjustment.

MARIA
(flat)
Adjustment to what? Shock?

CARTER
(as if he has said it too many times before)
She is not being treated with shock.
(after a beat)
How long you been sleeping outside?

Maria shrugs. She is still looking out the window.

MARIA
It's too hot in here.

CARTER
Why don't you turn on the fucking air conditioner?

Maria turns, and they look at each other helplessly, as if there are so many words between them that they can no longer find their way back.

CUT TO:

17 EXT. TECOPA, CALIFORNIA - FORWARD CUT - DAY 17

The main street of a desert town in blazing sun. A grocery, a motel, a bar, a coffee shop. The scrap of several Union 76 stations, dismantled and abandoned. There is no one on the street. A dog wanders across the dusty road. We are looking at a landscape without history or meaning.

17 CONTINUED: 17

MARIA (v.o.)

Details. I was born in Reno, Nevada, and moved nine years later to Silver Wells, Nevada, population then 28, now zero. We moved down to Silver Wells because my father lost the Reno house in a private game and happened to remember that he owned this town, Silver Wells. He had bought it or won it or maybe his father left it to him, I'm not sure which and it doesn't matter to you.

From my mother I inherited my looks and a tendency to migraine. From my father I inherited an optimism which did not leave me until recently.

My mother killed herself by cracking up a car ten miles east of Tonopah. My father died two years later of peritonitis in Rose de Lima Hospital, Vegas.

This is not a picture of Silver Wells.

CUT TO:

18 EXT. BZ'S BEACH HOUSE - DAY 18

Maria lies face down on the sundeck. BZ and his wife, HELENE, a good-looking woman in her late thirties, lie on chaises. BZ's mother, CARLOTTA, sits at a table playing solitaire. Carlotta is about 65, with the look of women who spend their lives creaming and tanning their skin in expensive places. She wears a Pucci shirt and pants. Carter sits across from Carlotta, reading the New Statesman.

The dialogue in this scene tends to overlap. Much of the time the CAMERA STAYS with Maria and the dialogue floats over.

From the kitchen we hear NELSON, a masseur.

NELSON

You can't mean for me to make decent Bloodies with a mix, BZ.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: 18

BZ
Why don't you start with one organic tomato.
(a beat;
to Carter)
Freddie Chaiken called. He's trying to sell us somebody to score the picture. I told him we weren't thinking about a score.

CARTER
I'm thinking about a score. The ANGEL BEACH original sound track grossed a million three fifty.

BZ
That's what I like about you, Carter. A cult director with a nose for commerc~~ialism.~~e

ANOTHER ANGLE - CARLOTTA

CARLOTTA
(peremptorily,
to Maria)
How's that Botticelli child you brought up to Pebble Beach last year? Still in an institution?

Maria tenses.

BZ
Nicely put, Mother.

Carter glances at Maria and speaks very quickly to Carlotta.

CARTER
BZ said you were in Cozumel.

Maria watches Carter during the next several speeches. He does not look back at her.

CARLOTTA
You can *have* Cozumel.
(slapping another
card down)
Also Machu Picchu.

HELENE
I can't even dream why you stopped at Cozumel. I mean since you can't bear Mexicans.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (2) 18

CARLOTTA
BZ said it's marvelous, that's why, Helene.

HELENE
BZ likes Mexicans.

Carter finally looks back at Maria. He shakes his head slightly, as if to warn her to stay in control.

CARLOTTA
I know why BZ likes Mexicans.

Maria turns over, away from Carter's warning.

MARIA
Why?

(CONTINUED)

Carlotta gives Maria a cool sharp glance as she speaks. Also as she speaks, she gathers up her cards and starts to re-lay her hand.

CARLOTTA
(to Helene)
Did you ask these people for lunch, Helena? Or what?

HELENE
It's only ~~12~~ one:30, Carlotta.

CARLOTTA
I always serve at ~~12~~ one:30.

HELENE
The last time I was in Pebble Beach, you served at quarter to four.

There is a beat, then Carlotta laughs.

CARLOTTA
You're my own natural child. The daughter I didn't have.

Nelson appears on the deck now. He holds a plastic Real-Lemon at elaborate arm's-length.

NELSON
First the mix, now this. An artificial lemon.

HELENE
An artificial lemon and...
(glancing at Carlotta)
... it's still only ~~12~~ one:30.

NELSON
You couldn't have bought an artificial lemon, BZ, it's a bad joke.

HELEN
All BZ's masseurs are purists.

CARLOTTA
(laying out another game)
Or Mexicans.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (3) 18

Over the next several lines the CAMERA PICKS UP things from Maria's POV. The uplift scars on Carlotta's temples. The lack of resiliency about Helene's upper arms. Nelson's unmarked child's face. The clean lines of BZ's face, and the bored contempt around his eyes. Helene smoothing cream into her eye lines. Helene smoothing cream into Carter's eye lines. Carter ignoring Helene.

NELSON
(overlapping
Carlotta's
last line)
Don't be draggy, Helene, run down the beach and ask Audrey Wise for some lemons. Ask her over for the quiche even. I mean we could definitely stand a few giggles.

HELENE
You know what Jerry Wise gave Audrey for her birthday?

BZ
Let me guess.
(he tests the
wind with his
finger)
One perfect white rose?

HELENE
One perfect thousand-dollar bill.

BZ
Maybe she can buy herself one perfect fuck.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (3) 18

NELSON
The lemons.

Carter throws down the script he is reading and stands up, pulling away from Helene's fingers massaging his temples.

CARTER
I'll get the goddamn lemons.

The CAMERA IS ON Maria, and STAYS THERE. She lies perfectly still, watching Carter disappear over the dunes. The other voices are OVER.

HELENE
That's one less for lunch.

NELSON
I seem to have come in after the main titles. Is he going to get the lemons or isn't he?

HELENE
(pleasantly)
Faggots make Carter nervous.

BZ laughs.

BZ
Actually, Nelson, that lemon is not artificial. That lemon is reconstituted.

CUT TO:

19 EXT. BZ'S BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT 19

The day at the beach has worn into evening at the beach. Dinner on the deck. Hurricane lamps, platters of mussels. A record PLAYING inside.

Around the table are Carlotta, BZ and Helene, Carter and Maria, and LES GOODWIN, a screenwriter about 35.

Maria sits next to Carlotta. She is drinking white wine. Her mussels are untouched. She stares as if transfixed at Carlotta's large diamond flashing in the lamplight as Carlotta attacks the mussels.

The CUT is on Carter's line. He is leaning back, expansively pulling on a cigar.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED: 19

CARTER

I always get breakfast out when I'm not shooting. I go to the Wilshire or the Beverly Hills, or Nate and Al's when I'm with an agent, I read the trades, I like to be alone at breakfast.

BZ

Or with an agent.

BZ is pouring more wine for Maria, who holds out her glass without taking her eyes from Carlotta's hand. BZ watches Maria through the scene.

MARIA

(very fast, almost sotto voce, almost to herself)

In fact he doesn't always get breakfast out. In fact the only time he got breakfast out this past year was the day he took Kate to the hospital.

CARLOTTA

Fascinating.

Silence. Les looks at Maria. Helene tries to break the impasse.

HELENE

Why do we always drink California wine?

LES

(anxious to help Helene)

Because you're so rich.

CARLOTTA

(with generations of bridging awkward moments behind her)

BZ, where did you find this divine Mr. Goodwin. Why hasn't he been here all day?

BZ

You've met Les before, Mother.

CARLOTTA

(unconvinced)

Of course I have.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED: 19

HELENE
You remember his wife.

On her line Helene makes a sign to Carlotta, unseen by Les: she holds out her wrists and makes imaginary slash cuts across them.

LES
Felicia.

(CONTINUED)

Carlotta has picked up a fruit knife and is playing with it.

CARLOTTA
Charming little thing. Never opened her mouth.

She draws the fruit knife lightly across her own wrist as if unable to drop her one real memory of the absent Felicia Goodwin.

CARLOTTA
(continuing)
Where is she?

LES
She's still in New York.

BZ
(to Carlotta)
Felicia didn't impress you.

CARLOTTA
Couldn't have been more charmed.
(she indicates Maria)
She was like this child.

BZ
Funny you should say that.

CARLOTTA
I bored her.
(to Maria)
Don't I bore you? Admit it.

Maria seems not to hear. BZ is still watching her.

CARTER
Carlotta's speaking to you, Maria.

Maria looks up, confused for an instant and then very animated.

MARIA
(to Carlotta)
Isn't September... I mean isn't it kind of the off season for Kitzbuhel?

CARLOTTA
Of course it is. That's why I'm going.

19 CONTINUED: (3) 19

Maria leans close to Carlotta, smiling, and her line, very fast and casual, overlaps Carlotta's.

MARIA
Of course that's why you're going. How much money do you give BZ and Helen to stay married?

An instant silence. Carlotta smiles brilliantly then, and removes Maria's wine glass from her hand.

The CUT is on BZ laughing.

CUT TO:

19A EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - NIGHT 19A

MONTAGE SHOTS -- Maria and Carter driving home.

20 EXT. MARIA'S BEVERLY HILLS HOUSE DRIVEWAY - NIGHT 20

Carter and Maria, in an open car, driving toward town. Carter is driving very fast. Maria wears a bandanna and is barefoot. They must raise their voices to be heard over the WIND and TRAFFIC.

CARTER
I didn't quite get your performance tonight.

MARIA
I'm sick of everybody's sick arrangements.

CARTER
You've got a fantastic vocabulary.

MARIA
I've got a fantastic vocabulary and I'm also pregnant.

Carter slows the car down. He looks at Maria. When she speaks again she enunicates very clearly.

MARIA
(continuing)
I said, I am also pregnant.

Carter's eyes return to the highway. His foot goes down hard on the accelerator. Maria leans against her window and stares straight ahead. When Carter speaks again it is without looking at Maria. His voice is flat.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: 20

CARTER
It's not mine. I suppose you're going to tell me it's not mine.

MARIA
I don't know.

CARTER
You don't fucking know.

Maria is silent.

CARTER
(continuing)
Who was it?

MARIA
You know.

A beat.

CARTER
Les Goodwin has been fired off three scripts this year.

CUT TO:

21 EXT. MARIA'S BEVERLY HILLS HOUSE DRIVEWAY - NIGHT 21

Carter turns off the Pacific Coast Highway onto Channel Road. He pulls to the side of the road and stops. Maria pulls off her scarf. They do not look at each other. They clearly have not spoken in several miles.

CARTER
(finally)
What makes you so sure?

MARIA
(as if abruptly exhausted)
Because I went to this doctor. And he gave me this shot. And he said if I really wasn't pregnant the shot would make me bleed in four days. And it was six days ago I had the shot.

Carter idles the engine, turns the headlights to bright and then back to normal and again back to bright and finally he pushes the button that rinses the windshield.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED: 21

CARTER
And so the doctor said it's certain?

MARIA
I haven't called him back.

CARTER
(a prosecutor's careful monotone)
You thought if you didn't call back it would just go away.

MARIA
I guess.

CARTER
Who was the doctor?

MARIA
Just a doctor. On Wilshire.

Carter punches violently at another button, turning off the water jet and turning on the windshield wipers.

CARTER
A doctor you didn't know.

Maria puts her bare feet on the dashboard. She says nothing. The windshield wipers CLICK back and forth in the dry hot evening.

CARTER
I'm interested in the mechanics of this. I'm interested in how your mind works. How exactly you picked this particular doctor.

Maria takes her scarf from her shoulders. She folds it and smooths it carefully over her bare knees. When she finally speaks her voice is without emotion.

MARIA
He was near Saks. I was having my hair done at Saks.

CUT TO:

22 INT. MARIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 22

Carter is on the telephone. It is sometime later that same night. Maria comes into the room.

(CONTINUED)

It is almost as if she is a somnambulist. She sits in a chair and watches the call, folding and unfolding the scarf she had in the car. Carter is writing down a telephone number, talking into the telephone.

CAR~~TER~~
~~456 2033... It's a service~~...
~~You call and leave a message~~ and
~~he gets back to you... Okay.~~..
~~Thanks.~~

Carter hangs up the telephone. He rips the number off the pad and deliberately folds it in half and then in quarters.

CARTER
(continuing)
I'm going to move to the Wilshire.

MARIA
I'm sorry.

Carter opens his attache case. He throws a couple of scripts into it.

MARIA
(continuing)
Whatever that means.

Carter pays no attention.

MARIA
(continuing)
Not much.

Carter closes the attache case. His voice, when he speaks, is uninflected. He holds the folded piece of paper in his hand.

CARTER
I got a telephone number for
you. You can call it tomorrow.

MARIA
For what?

CARTER
This is the number of a doctor
who is... semi-retired. He's
supposed to be the only man in
Los Angeles County who does clean
work.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA
Clean work?

CARTER
Very fast and very quiet. No signing in, no signing out at a hospital. All cleaned up in an afternoon.

MARIA
Very clean.

CARTER
(overlapping his voice rising over hers)
I'm not interested in reading any blind items about what you're doing in Cedars-Siani. 'Which young director's wife is getting a well-deserved if somewhat unexpected rest.' Forget that.

Maria laughs.

MARIA
Actually you're not the youngest director I can think of.

CARTER
Shut up.

Maria gets up abruptly. She is no longer amused.

MARIA
I won't do it.

CARTER
All right, don't do it. Go ahead and have this kid.

Maria looks at him warily. He looks at her before he goes on.

CARTER
(continuing)
And I'll take Kate.

There is a long beat.

MARIA
Listen. If I do this, can I keep Kate. You won't make any trouble?

CARTER
We'll see.

22 CONTINUED: (3) 22

MARIA
Promise.

CARTER
I won't promise anything, Maria.
I said we'll see.

CUT TO:

23 EXT. MARIA'S POOL - DAY 23

Maria sits on the edge of the chaise, dressed as she was the night before. A blanket is pulled over her. She gropes for her dark glasses and puts them on. Then she picks up the jack telephone. She holds the telephone a moment, then glances at the notepad on the table and begins to dial. When she finishes dialing she waits for an answer. As she waits she reaches behind her on the chaise and finds a worn doll. Her fingers smooth the doll's apron as she speaks.

MARIA
I was given this number... I
mean to call...
(a beat)
My husband did, actually... Mrs.
Maria Lang.

CUT TO:

24 EXT. A PARTY - NIGHT 24

The same party as on page 8. Maria sits at a round table not paying much attention to those around her. She is eating a large pink shrimp in tiny bites. BZ sits across from her, laughing with two beautiful French boys, who are telling him a story in rapid French. The very young girl who was dancing on the terrace in the scene on page 8 dreamily smokes a joint and caresses the inside of the thigh of one of the French boys. BZ laughs at the conclusion of the story.

BZ
(to Maria)
This one sold that one to an
Arab in Tangier for plane fare
back to Paris.

The French boy whose leg is being caressed again speaks rapidly in French for a moment. BZ listens and then laughs.

BZ
(again to Maria)
And that one stayed with the Arab
for seven months.

Larry Kulik passes the table, leaning close to Maria.

LARRY
You ought to take a look at my
new sauna. Stereo piped in,
beaucoup fantastic.

Maria makes no response. Larry moves around the table to BZ.

LARRY
(to BZ)
Any complications?

BZ
Simplicity itself. The chickie
wants the frog. The frog wants
the frog.
(to Maria)
Hey, la Tristeza. We're moving
the party back to my house.

MARIA
I'm going home.

BZ
You're not exactly a shot of meth
tonight anyway.

MARIA
I feel beaucoup fantastic.

On her line Maria stands up and drops the uneaten half of the pink shrimp into a glass of white wine on the table.

CUT TO:

25 EXT. BZ'S BEACH HOUSE - DAY 25

Maria sits rigid, all nerves, on the deck staring out to sea. She is wearing a bathing suit and a bandanna. BZ watches her.

MARIA
You know what I'd like to have?

25 CONTINUED: 25

BZ
What?

MARIA
A house on a beach... with some rocks... and on the rocks... some mussels... and I'd gather the mussels every day... and cook them.

BZ
That would be very pretty.

MARIA
With Kate.

BZ
You know what the mussels would turn out to be?

MARIA
Toxic.

CUT TO:

26 EXT. BZ'S KITCHEN - DAY 26

Later the same day. Maria is still in her bathing suit and bandanna. She has a shoulder bag over her shoulder and her car keys in her hand. She is drinking a can of bouillon from the can. BZ is pouring himself a drink.

BZ
You want to stay?

Maria shakes her head, no.

MARIA
I'm going back into town.

BZ
Stick around.

MARIA
What for?

BZ
I'll probably be having some people by later.

MARIA
You mean like Larry Kulik.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED: 26

~~BZ~~
~~Maybe Larry Kulik.~~

~~MARIA~~
~~And maybe the chickie.~~

~~BZ~~
~~And maybe the froggie. They'll all get what they're coming for.~~

~~Maria finishes the boullion, picks up a piece of cheese and drops it into the shoulder bag.~~

~~MARIA~~
~~Don't you ever get tired of doing favors for people.~~

~~A pause.~~

~~BZ~~
~~You don't know how tired.~~

CUT TO:

27 EXT. FREEWAY - DAY 27

Maria driving. The RADIO is on. She is maneuvering into an exit lane and eating a hardboiled egg. Maria eats the egg without taking her eyes from the freeway.

Her telephone call to the abortionist's assistant continued over the action.

MARIA (v.o.)
Are you the... doctor?

ABORTIONIST'S ASST. (v.o.)
His colleague, Maria. The doctor will want to know how many weeks.

MARIA (v.o.)
How many weeks what?

ABORTIONIST'S ASST. (v.o.)
How advanced is the problem, Maria?

MARIA (v.o.)
Six weeks. Seven weeks.

ABORTIONIST'S ASST. (v.o.)
This would be a... relatively expensive office visit.

MARIA (v.o.)
How much?

ABORTIONIST'S ASST. (v.o.)
I would think a thousand.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED: 27

MARIA (v.o.)
When?

ABORTIONIST'S ASST. (v.o.)
We'll be in touch.

MARIA (v.o.)
I need to know when.

ABORTIONIST'S ASST. (v.o.)
(chiding)
I said we'd be in touch, Maria.
We will.

On the last lines Maria is entering the exit ramp. On the overhead exit sign a single word has been scrawled over the white lettering:

FUCK

CUT TO:

28 THREE FREEWAY SIGNS - EACH FULL SCREEN 28

Each sign is on the screen only a fraction of a second. They are abstracts, suggestions of motion rather than signs to be read.

The first reads:

NORMANDIE 1/4
VERMONT 3/4
HARBOR FWY 1

The second reads:

EXIT LANE ONLY

The third reads:

BEGIN FREEWAY

CUT TO:

29 EXT. SAKS PARKING LOT - DAY 29

Maria and the PARKING ATTENDANT are trying to get a large wicker basinette into Maria's small car.

ATTENDANT
Not going to make it.

Maria holds one of the roof panels of the Corvette.

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED: 29

MARIA
What if I leave this here?

ATTENDANT
Swell. What do I do with it?

MARIA
Keep it.

ATTENDANT
What do I want with the roof of your car?

Maria points to the basinette.

MARIA
I need it.

ATTENDANT
United Parcel, you'll get it Tuesday.

MARIA
I'm having a baby.

ATTENDANT
Not before Tuesday you're not having a baby.

Maria's mood to this point has been light, coming on a little with the Attendant. Now tears suddenly run down her face.

ATTENDANT
Maybe they could get it to you on the Monday truck. I don't *know*. It depends on where you *live*.

MARIA
I don't need it.

CUT TO:

30 TWO FREEWAY SIGNS - EACH FULL SCREEN 30

Again, each sign is on the screen only a fraction of a second.

The first reads:

BEGIN FREEWAY

The second:

END FREEWAY

CUT TO:

31 EXT. FREEWAY - DAY 31

Maria stands by the Cyclone fence on the center divider. Her car, which has a flat tire and is up on a jack, is beside her. She seems to be changing the tire herself.

On the CUT, a black-and-white Highway Patrol car, coming in the opposite direction, is maneuvering across several lanes of traffic to the center divider. The Highway Patrol car stops on the other side of the Cyclone fence.

Maria walks to the fence to speak to the patrolman, who stays in his car.

There is constant TRAFFIC NOISE. We do not hear all their dialogue. Sometimes we hear, overlapping their dialogue, a voice-over telephone conversation between Maria and the Abortionist's Assistant.

MARIA
(to the Highway Patrolman)
It's all right, don't bother. I like doing it.

PATROLMAN
I'll come around and take you to a gas station. It's dangerous out here.

MARIA
I like it out here.

The Patrolman laughs, and so does Maria. They say a few words we do not hear. The Patrolman is bantering now. He sees it as an interlude between a cop and a pretty girl, and Maria falls into the role. As they banter unheard, we hear a snatch of the voice-over.

ABORTIONIST'S ASST. (v.o.)
I said we'd be in touch, Maria, and we are. The doctor wonders if, say, Tuesday afternoon would be convenient?

MARIA (v.o.)
Where?

ABORTIONIST'S ASST. (v.o.)
We'll be in touch again to tell you where.

The Highway Patrolman has gotten out of his car now. He is inspecting Maria's work through the Cyclone fence. He seems to approve.

MARIA
(to the Patrolman)
My father taught me how to change tires. Really, I can do it all myself.

PATROLMAN
We just want to get you where you're going.

MARIA
I'm not going anywhere.

PATROLMAN
You've got to be going somewhere.

Maria laughs with him and shakes her head. He straightens up. Their voices fade a moment and we again hear the voice-over.

MARIA (v.o.)
What do I need to do?

ABORTIONIST'S ASST. (v.o.)
Nothing at all, Maria. Just wait for our call on Tuesday... don't eat after breakfast... and... let's see, the thousand in cash, of course.

CLOSE on Maria and the Highway Patrolman. The Patrolman is laughing indulgently. They are still the cop and the pretty girl who can change her own tire.

PATROLMAN
You just like the freeway.

MARIA
I mean... it makes you feel as if they had some reason in mind when they built it, you know what I mean?

They are still laughing together, but Maria's next line is suddenly more earnest, and more urgent, than the Patrolman knows.

MARIA
(continuing)
I mean it makes you feel as if you might find out the reason?

CUT TO:

32 FOUR FREEWAY SIGNS - FULL SCREEN 32

Each flashes on the screen even faster than before.

The first reads:

GOLDEN STATE NORTHBOUND

The second:

GOLDEN STATE SOUTHBOUND

And the third and fourth:

BEGIN FREEWAY

END FREEWAY

CUT TO:

33 INT. BANK - DAY 33

~~Maria at a teller's cage.~~

~~TELLER~~
~~You want the whole thousand in cash?~~

~~MARIA~~
~~I'm taking a trip.~~
~~(obsessively embroidering)~~
~~Mexico City. Guadalajara.~~

~~TELLER~~
~~You don't want traveler's checks?~~

~~Maria shakes her head.~~

~~CLOSE on the bills being counted out. The Teller murmurs her count as she lays the bills down. Maria, talking almost to herself, overlaps the Teller's count.~~

~~TELLER~~
~~Twenty... forty... sixty... eighty ... one hundred... twenty... forty ... sixty... eighty... two hundred...~~

~~MARIA~~
~~Cozumel. Machu Picchu. Kitzbuhel.~~

CUT TO:

SCENE 33 TO REPLACE CURRENT SCENE 33

EXT BZ'S BEACH HOUSE DAY

Maria sits rigid, all nerves, on the deck. She stares out to sea. BZ watches her.

MARIA
You know what I'd like to
have after this is all over?

BZ
What?

MARIA
A house on a beach...with some
rocks...and on the rocks...some
mussels...and I'd gather the
mussels every day...and cook them.

BZ
That would be very pretty.

MARIA
With Kate.

BZ
You know what the mussels would
turn out to be?

MARIA
Toxic.

CUT TO:

34 EXT. KATE'S HOSPITAL - DAY 34

A cluster of cottages around a central building. There is a playground outside Kate's cottage. Over the door of the cottage is a script sign:

BLUEBIRD COTTAGE

Bluebirds and morning glories twine around the script. Beyond them is a sandbox, where four children play. One child is Kate's age, but the others seem too old to be playing in a sandbox. A nurse and a male orderly watch the children in the sandbox.

Maria is brushing Kate's hair, which is already flawlessly brushed. Maria talks almost to herself. Kate watches the sandbox.

MARIA
You see I need to come out here,
to brush your hair. They never
brush your hair.

Kate takes the brush from Maria and begins brushing Maria's hair, which is very tangled. Maria drops her head obediently, but otherwise seems not to notice. She keeps on talking.

MARIA
(continuing)
You'll see when you come home,
I'll wash your hair every morning
and brush it dry in the sun. My
mother used to do that for me...

Kate's attention is wandering back to the sandbox, but Maria seems oblivious.

MARIA
(continuing)
She'd wash my hair and dry it in
the sun... She used to cut my
hair in bangs to look like
Margaret Sullivan... Listen.
We'll get a new house. Just you
and me. And we'll sleep in the
same bed and we'll grow...
cucumbers and I'll teach you how
to... pickle them...

Kate darts suddenly to the sandbox and strikes one of the older children with the hairbrush. Almost faster than the eye, the nurse seizes Kate and hustles her toward the cottage.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED: 34

The orderly restrains the other children and leads them away from the sandbox. Maria is left defenseless and alone. She picks up the hairbrush from the sand.

As she waits, we hear in v.o. what seems to be a telephone conversation between herself and Carter.

CARTER (v.o.)
You called the doctor.

MARIA (v.o.)
Yes, I called the doctor. Everything's arranged, everything's perfectly taken care of.

CARTER (v.o.)
What did...

MARIA (v.o.)
I have to go now. I have to hang up.

CARTER (v.o.)
Just hold on a minute, Maria. I want to know what the doctor said.

The nurse emerges from the cottage without Kate.

CARTER (v.o.)
(continuing)
I said, what did he say, Maria.

MARIA (v.o.)
They said they'd call me someday and on the day they called I'd meet them someplace with a pad and a belt and $1,000 in cash. All right, Carter? All right?

The nurse crosses the lawn and approaches Maria.

NURSE
If you had called, we definitely would have suggested you wait until tomorrow.

MARIA
I won't be here tomorrow.

NURSE
I see.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED: (2) 34

MARIA

One thing. You know when she wakes up at night and says, 'oise, oise', it means she's...

Maria falters under the nurse's impassive gaze. She traces a circle in the sandbox with her toe.

MARIA

(continuing; finally)

... having a nightmare.

The nurse says nothing.

MARIA

(continuing)

I mean, I don't know if I ever told you that.

The nurse smiles professionally, dismissing Maria.

NURSE

I'm sure you did.

CUT TO:

35 A FILM CLIP 35

Another clip from the film "Maria".

Maria is sitting on the floor of the New York brownstone apartment first seen in the film clip on page 10.

At the direction of Carter, whom we do not see but whose voice we hear, she is exhibiting some snapshots to the CAMERA. She seems bewildered but obedient. She is indulging Carter. She sees it as a game, not quite sure what he is doing with her.

She holds up a snapshot of two men, one of them Benny Austin, holding a rattlesnake to exhibit its length.

MARIA

This was my father... and his partner, Benny Austin... and a snake. Actually neither one of them killed the snake. My mother killed the snake... but she was the only one who could work the camera.

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED: 35

Maria holds up a night-club photograph of her father, herself as a little girl, and a young woman with a gardenia in her hair.

MARIA
(continuing)
This was my mother on her thirtieth birthday. We drove down to Vegas to see Patti Page at the Fremont. My mother had Rum-and-Coke and gave me a drink of it.

CARTER (o.s.)
Were they happy?

MARIA
Yes. We used to drive a pickup. My father always had a bottle of bourbon on the floorboards...

CARTER (o.s.)
Didn't you tell me your father used to ball that waitress in his restaurant in Silver Wells.

MARIA
(falling out of the game)
I don't want to talk about that.

CARTER (o.s.)
Pauline, wasn't it?

MARIA
Paulette.

CARTER (o.s.)
Paulette. Tell me about the place in Silver Wells.

MARIA
Two slots and a crap table.

CARTER (o.s.)
Two slots and a crap table. Whatever happened to Pauline?

MARIA
Paulette. You know what happened to her.

CARTER (o.s.)
Tell me again.

MARIA
She's living in Arizona.

CARTER (o.s.)
Where?

MARIA
Sun City.

CARTER (o.s.)
Ahh.
(a beat)
You ever envy Paulette?

MARIA
No.

CARTER (o.s.)
Balling your father.

MARIA
No.

CARTER (o.s.)
You ever think about it?

MARIA
No.

CARTER (o.s.)
What it would be like?

MARIA
No.

CARTER (o.s.)
On that crap table with the old man. That soft green felt crap table?

MARIA
No.

CUT TO:

36 INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT 36

Carter on a television seminar. A still from the scene we have just seen is projected on the wall behind him. There are two other panelists.

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED: 36

CARTER
I was experimenting... I was trying to see how far I could break down the barrier between film and real... doing it in a deliberately formalized way... somebody speaking to a camera and yet the personality constantly shattering the conventional camera-subject relationship.

PANELIST #1
The personality being your wife's.

CARTER
She wasn't my wife yet, no.

PANELIST #2
You didn't just hire her, Carter. You couldn't have gotten that particular performance...

CARTER
That's the whole point of the film. It was not a performance.

CUT TO:

37 INT. MARIA'S POOL HOUSE - DAY 37

Carter's television seminar is seen on a television screen.

The floor of the pool house is wet with water tracked in from the pool. Maria, barefoot and with wet hair, fastens the back of her dress as she watches the screen.

PANELIST #1
(on TV)
You mean existentially it was not a performance.

CARTER
(on TV)
I mean it was not a performance.

PANELIST #2
(on TV)
This was her life. As it were.

Maria yanks the zipper closed. She draws out each word as she speaks.

MARIA
As it were.

CUT TO:

38 EXT. VENTURA FREEWAY - DAY 38

Maria is driving in a northbound lane. She is bare-legged and her hair is wet. Off to her left the seventy foot cut-out "T" of a Thriftimart can be seen flashing through the oleander, oddly lit in the dull sunlight.

Over the action is a telephone conversation between Maria and the abortionist's assistant.

MARIA (v.o.)
Ventura Freeway north, all right.

ABORTIONIST'S ASST. (v.o.)
You know what exit? You got it down?

MARIA (v.o.)
I wrote it down. I know what exit.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED: 38

ABORTIONIST'S ASST. (v.o.)
Under the big red T.

MARIA (v.o.)
What big red T?

ABORTIONIST'S ASST. (v.o.)
(as if she is a little simple)
The Thriftimart. I told you the Thriftimart.

MARIA (v.o.)
The Thriftimart.

ABORTIONIST'S ASST. (v.o.)
The big red T.

CUT TO:

39 EXT. THRIFTIMART PARKING LOT - DAY 39

LONG SHOT. The big red T. Maria waiting in her car.

A large soft man in white duck pants and a white turtle-neck sweater and white sneakers walks from a white Cadillac and gets into Maria's car.

CUT TO:

40 EXT. NEW SUBDIVISION - DAY 40

Maria driving slowly through the streets of the subdivision. The houses are all very small, very close together, identical to one another, and absolutely uninhabited. The houses are beginning to rot, still unpainted. There is no planting whatsoever, not a tree, not a flower, not a patch of lawn. Faded subdivision flags whip in the wind. This development has been uninhabited for years, as if some bankruptcy, some litigation, froze it before its completion.

In the passenger seat of Maria's car sits the large soft man in white. His boneless freckled hand rests on his knee. He is humming snatches of "I Get A Kick Out of You". When we hear his voice we recognize him as the abortionist's assistant.

As they approach an intersection Maria looks at him for directions.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED: 40

ABORTIONIST'S ASST.
Straight here, Maria. I hope you don't mind my calling you Maria.

Maria shakes her head.

ABORTIONIST'S ASST.
(continuing)
You could call me Jack.

MARIA
Is that your name?

He slaps his knee lightly, as if Maria has made a joke. He hums another snatch of "I Get a Kick Out of You", then breaks off.

ABORTIONIST'S ASST.
Don't take offense if I ask you something.

Maria shakes her head. Her hands straighten on the steering wheel.

ABORTIONIST'S ASST.
(continuing)
What kind of mileage do you get on this?

MARIA
Is that the question?

ABORTIONIST'S ASST.
I'm interested.

MARIA
(after the slightest pause)
Pretty good. Not too bad.

ABORTIONIST'S ASST.
Fifteen? Twenty?

MARIA
Maybe eighteen.

ABORTIONIST'S ASST.
Left here, Maria. You ever drive a Camaro?

(CONTINUED)

MARIA
Uh... no.

ABORTIONIST'S ASST.
That's a leased Cad I drive, I've been thinking about getting out of leases, picking up a little Camaro.

MARIA
(neutral, like a therapist)
You think you'll buy a Camaro.

ABORTIONIST'S ASST.
I got my eye on this particular Camaro, exact model of the pace car in the Indianapolis Five.

Maria's eyes are straight ahead. She lights a cigarette and crushes it out immediately. She crushes it not in the empty ashtray but on the chrome panel adjoining the ashtray.

The man's voice continues:

ABORTIONIST'S ASST.
(continuing)
I got a friend, he can write me a sweet deal if it's on the floor much longer. They almost had a buyer last week but lucky for me -- here, Maria, right here, this driveway.

Maria pulls into the driveway of a house which looks no more inhabited than any of the others, except for Venetian blinds, closed, in all the windows. She turns off the ignition and looks at her passenger.

A tall thin man, graying, the very portrait of the semi-retired gynecologist in a linen jacket, opens the front door of the house and waits.

MARIA
(to her passenger)
Lucky for you what?

ABORTIONIST'S ASST.
(opening his door)
Lucky for me, the guy's credit didn't hold up.

CUT TO:

41 SIX FAST CUTS INSIDE THE HOUSE - DAY 41

The FIRST is the doctor's linen jacket, folded on a chair.

The SECOND is a chrome kitchen garbage container, with a closed top and a foot pedal.

The THIRD is the doctor's foot hitting the foot pedal.

The FOURTH is the chrome top springing open and the doctor's hand, in a thin rubber glove, dropping something into the container.

The FIFTH is the top dropping closed.

The SIXTH is a faucet being turned on, the SOUND of gloves being peeled off, hands being washed.

OVER these cuts are the voices of Maria and the doctor.

MARIA
What do you do with the baby?

DOCTOR (v.o.)
It's just tissue, Maria.

MARIA (v.o.)
Whatever you call it.

CUT TO:

42 INT. SUBDIVISION LIVING ROOM - DAY 42

A suite of living room furniture, the closed Venetian blinds. An air conditioner whirs.

Maria walks into the living room from the bedroom, dressed as she was in the car, her hair damp and messy. She is followed by the doctor, pulling on his linen jacket.

The abortionist's assistant sits watching an afternoon movie on television and eating a candy bar. He does not look up as he speaks.

ABORTIONIST'S ASST.
All finished?

DOCTOR
All set.

He gives Maria a white envelope full of pills.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED: 42

DOCTOR
(continuing)
Ergot and Tetracycline. One of each every six hours.

The assistant still does not take his eyes from the screen. Maria and the doctor smile politely at each other, like strangers waiting for an elevator door to close.

Still without taking his eyes from the screen the assistant reaches into his pocket, takes out a candy bar and holds it out to Maria. Maria stares at it blankly.

ABORTIONIST'S ASST.
Take it. I get them by the case, this guy I know is the distributor.

Dazed, Maria takes the candy bar. She seems uncertain what to do with it. At that moment the movie changes to a commercial, and the assistant switches off the set regretfully and stands up.

ABORTIONIST'S ASST.
(continuing)
You missed a pretty fair movie, Maria.

CUT TO:

43 EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT IN OXNARD - NIGHT 43

The ice machine in the parking lot. Maria scooping into it with the tin scoop tied to the machine's handle. She fills a plastic ice bucket with ice, then gets two pills from the white envelope and swallows them with water from a cooler.

Maria walks across the parking lot, carrying the ice bucket. She passes the fenced swimming pool in the middle of the asphalt. The pool is lit, and steam rises off it in the cool night. She reaches the other side of the parking lot and disappears into a breezeway with a covered stairway.

CUT TO:

44 EXT. THE MOTEL IN OXNARD - NIGHT 44

Maria walking along the second-story walkway, carrying the ice bucket. At the last door she stops, then pushes the door open and walks in.

CUT TO:

45 INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT 45

CLOSE on Maria putting the ice down on a plastic tray, very deliverately, as if arranging a tea table.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Les Goodwin sitting on the edge of the bed, loosening his tie, watching Maria. He is aware that she is incommunicado. Finally:

LES
That used up five minutes.

Maria very carefully drops ice cubes in two water glasses.

LES
(continuing)
You call me up to Oxnard so I could watch you mix drinks?

Maria turns and looks at him.

LES
(continuing)
What the hell are you doing up here, anyway.

MARIA
I was on the Ventura Freeway.

LES
(giving the line a reading)
'I came up out of Central America traveling fast.'

Maria is still silent.

LES
(continuing)
That's a joke, Maria. The first line of a book I read once.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LES (cont'd)
Adrian Holt did the screenplay. Paramount dropped it.

Maria hands him a drink.

LES
(continuing)
I had a fight with Felicia at lunch, I've got a rewrite due tomorrow morning, I tell you something funny and you don't laugh.

MARIA
When I want to hear something funny I'll call you up again.

LES
What do you want?

MARIA
I want a very large steak. And before the very large steak I want three drinks.

This is not the expected answer. Les regards her warily.

MARIA
(continuing)
Someplace with loud music.

LES
We're in Oxnard, Maria.
(a beat)
You know how long it takes to get here from Metro?

MARIA
We could rent a typewriter.

LES
What's the matter with you?

MARIA
(very fast, matter-of-fact)
I had an abortion at five o'clock. In Encino.

There is a long beat. Les Goodwin is at once defensive and evasive.

45 CONTINUED: (2) 45

LES
We could have talked about it,
I could have... I mean... You
could have told me that.

MARIA
I could have told Adrian Holt.

CUT TO:

46 INT. MARIA'S HOUSE - DAY 46

A series of FAST CUTS -- Maria turning on the faucets, in every sink in the house. CLOSEUPS of sinks and water gurgling down the drain.

CUT TO:

THE DOCTOR'S FOOT

hitting the foot pedal of the chrome container. Same film as the THIRD cut on page

CUT TO:

THE CHROME TOP OF THE GARBAGE CONTAINER

dropping closed. Same film as the FIFTH cut, page

CUT TO:

32 ←
Maria

47 EXT. SILVERLAKE BUNGALOW - DAY 47

Maria ringing the bell on the porch of a shabby bungalow. The bell is in a tangle of dying poinsettia. The shriveled petals fall as Maria presses the bell.

A card above the bell reads:

L. KERENSKY
BY APPOINTMENT ONLY
NO TRADESMEN

CUT TO:

48 INT. SILVERLAKE BUNGALOW - DAY 48

The room is cluttered with torn newspaper clippings and stained file folders, the retreat of an eccentric obsessive.

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED: 48

L. KERENSKY stands over the floor furnace. He wears two worn cardigan sweaters and is about fifty. Maria sits on the edge of a faded brocade sofa.

KERENSKY
You think it's warm in here.

MARIA
It is warm in here. I mean I don't think it's warm in here, it... is.

Kerensky smiles thinly and pours some Pernod into a cheese glass half full of water. He swirls the milky fluid.

KERENSKY
Pernod?

Maria shakes her head.

KERENSKY
(continuing)
Some people think of hypnosis as a... medical art.

MARIA
You're not a real hypnotist.

KERENSKY
What is a real hypnotist?

Maria averts her eyes.

MARIA
I'm only here because I read this... advertisement...

She holds up a newspaper advertisement.

KERENSKY
You think you have to apologize for being here.

MARIA
About taking people back...

KERENSKY
Regressing them.

Maria leans forward and looks at him, her face naked. Abruptly she seems the more obsessive of the two.

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED: (2) 48

MARIA
To when they were just foetuses?

KERENSKY
And ever further. To a previous life.

MARIA
Not further. I don't care about further.

KERENSKY
You wish to remember what it was like when...

MARIA
I was a foetus.

KERENSKY
You wish to recapture that consciousness.

MARIA
I need to know if they think.

CUT TO:

49 THE DOCTOR'S HAND 49

dropping something into the chrome container. Same film as the FOURTH cut on page

CUT TO:

50 THE CHROME TOP OF THE GARBAGE CONTAINER 50

dropping closed. Same film as the FIFTH cut on page

CUT TO:

51 SNAPSHOT - FULL SCREEN 51

This is the snapshot first seen in the film clip on page of Maria's father, Benny Austin, and a rattlesnake.

A man's fingers can be seen holding the snapshot.

Maria's and BENNY AUSTIN's voices are over.

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED: 51

MARIA (v.o.)
Remember? Remember that day?

BENNY (v.o.)
Remember, hell. It was the day your dad and I had the grand opening for the miniature golf.

CUT TO:

52 INT. MARIA'S BEVERLY HILLS HOUSE - DAY 52

Maria and Benny Austin, a small weathered man about fifty-five, wearing a worn suit and a lariat tie clasp. They are sitting in the living room eating from a bucket of Chicken Delight.

Benny is putting the snapshot down on the cut.

MARIA
And nobody came.

BENNY
Yeah, well, we were ahead of our time, Maria. Ahead of our time. That was your father's only Waterloo, he was a man always twenty years before his time. I'm not talking only about the miniature golf. I'm talking about the ghost-town scheme. The automatic blackjack concept. Harry Wyeth could be a Rockefeller in Silver Wells today.

MARIA
There isn't any Silver Wells today. It's in the middle of a missile range.

BENNY
I'm talking about as it was, Maria. Silver Wells as it was. Have a thigh.

Benny hands Maria a piece of chicken. She holds it but does not eat it.

BENNY
(continuing)
The minute you called, I got together all your dad's papers.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED: 52

BENNY (cont'd)
I got his mineral certificates right here.

MARIA
That's not why I called.

These lines tend to overlap, Benny always misinterpreting Maria.

BENNY
Of course you want these certificates, honey, they're your inheritance. No action now, but quien sabe?

MARIA
I just wanted to see you because I've been thinking about my mother --

BENNY
Your dad and I once knew a guy who thought his rights were worthless, it turns out he's sitting on pitchblende...

MARIA
You're the only one left who remembers my mother --

BENNY
So loaded with uranium the counters went haywire.

MARIA
My mother.

A beat. Benny comes down a little.

BENNY
You're the picture of her. Jesus, but you're Francine's girl. I see you sitting here, I swear I'm back in Silver Wells with Francine and your Dad.

MARIA
There is no Silver Wells.

CUT TO:

53 EXT. MARIA'S LAWN - NIGHT 53

Maria stands on the covered terrace eating cottage cheese from a cardboard container with a silver fork. She is barefoot.

Beyond the sheltered terrace a hard rain falls. Maria's eyes are on the lighted swimming pool, the rain pelting the water surface.

Still eating the cottage cheese, she turns and walks through the open door into the house. She leaves the door open, as if she is either unaware of the rain or determined to make no concessions to it.

CUT TO:

54 INT. MARIA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT 54

Maria walks into the kitchen, finishing the cottage cheese. The kitchen is that of someone troubled and solitary: there are crackers and half-empty sardine tins on the sink, stacks of unopened newspapers on the unused dishwasher.

Without looking Maria steps on the foot pedal of a chrome garbage container similar to that in the cuts shown previously.

CLOSE ON THE CHROME TOP SPRINGING UP. There is a second's beat, then the top drops again. — B2 here.

CUT TO:

55 EXT. FOUNTAIN AVENUE - DAY 55

Rain is falling. LONG SHOT of Maria at the door of an apartment building. The middle-aged woman at the door is shaking her head, no vacancy. She closes the door.

Maria stands on the sidewalk a moment, then crosses the street to another apartment building, a Hollywood Moorish complex around a patio.

CUT TO:

56 INT. FOUNTAIN AVENUE APARTMENT - DAY 56

Maria and the MANAGER of the building, a middle-aged queen wearing a pumpkin-colored velour beach robe.

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED: 56

He holds a ring of keys. There is a copy of the Hollywood Reporter in his robe pocket.

Maria looks around the furnished apartment with rote interest, running taps and opening closet doors because that is what is expected of her.

MANAGER
You'd be surprised at the history these apartments have.

Maria is running water into the sink and watching it drain.

MANAGER
(continuing)
Juan Fuller used to have 2-D.

MARIA
I don't know him.

MANAGER
One of the great old second-unit directors. That's a new disposal.

Maria snaps the faucet closed and turns away from the sink.

MANAGER
(continuing)
No pets. No children.

CUT TO:

57 INT. FOUNTAIN AVENUE APARTMENT - NIGHT 57

The only signs of Maria's tenancy are a few photographs of Kate and a large open suitcase.

Maria, wearing an old sweater, stands at the window staring out into the rain. The telephone is RINGING.

Almost absently, Maria picks up the receiver and puts it down again, breaking the connection. The RINGING stops.

Maria still stares out the window.

CUT TO:

58 INT. FOUNTAIN AVENUE APARTMENT - DAY 58

Maria, in pants and the same old sweater, stands in the kitchen tying on a bandanna. She is barefoot.

BZ stands holding a pile of wet mail. He has just come in from the rain. He drops the mail on the kitchen table.

BZ
I picked up your mail from the house.

Maria says nothing. She behaves as if neither BZ nor her mail is in the room.

BZ
(continuing)
Or rather from the front porch. Where it was getting a little... how would you say... conspicuous.

Maria looks in a cupboard for a laundry basket. She still makes no response to BZ.

BZ
(continuing)
What's the matter, have I caught you in the middle of an overdose?

MARIA
If I'd wanted to read my mail I wouldn't have moved.

On her line, Maria, carrying the laundry basket, walks toward the door.

CUT TO:

59 EXT. FOUNTAIN AVENUE PATIO - DAY 59

Maria, carrying the laundry basket, walks barefoot across the patio in the rain. She is followed by BZ.

Maria opens a door across the patio from her own apartment and walks in. BZ follows her.

CUT TO:

60 INT. FOUNTAIN AVENUE LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY 60

Washing machines and dryers. An OLD WOMAN sits at a large trestle table reading the Los Angeles Times and eating a frozen enchilada from its container with a plastic picnic fork. She has an open Coca-Cola in front of her.

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED: 60

Maria, without looking around at BZ, opens a dryer and tests its contents for dryness.

BZ
Carter wants to know what you're doing.

MARIA
Nothing.

Still without looking at BZ she slams the dryer shut, resets the dial, and sits down at the table next to the old woman. The woman slides her Coca-Cola toward Maria without looking up from her paper. Maria takes a drink of it and slides it back.

BZ leans against the dryer and watches.

OLD WOMAN
This little girl four years old in Tarzana, she had a tea party with Purex.

MARIA
(a statement of fact)
She died.

OLD WOMAN
It says the mother's under sedation.
(a beat)
Caucasian.

MARIA
Sometimes they put their heads in polyethelene bags.

Maria looks at BZ for the first time.

BZ
(not unkindly; after a beat)
I'll tell him you're doing your laundry.

CUT TO:

61 INT. FOUNTAIN AVENUE APARTMENT - NIGHT 61

Maria sits in bed. She is wearing a robe and smoking a joint and watching a television news broadcast showing flood damage. The SOUND is off. The picture is of floodwater undercutting the bank beneath a house.

(CONTINUED)

Carter is standing in the room, wearing a raincoat. Maria does not take her eyes from the television screen.

CARTER

There's some principle I'm not grasping, Maria. You've got a $1,500-a-month house sitting empty in Beverly Hills, and you're living in a furnished apartment on Fountain Avenue.

(a beat)

You want to be closer to Schwab's? Is that it?

MARIA

I'm not living here. I'm just staying here.

CARTER

I still don't get the joke.

Maria leans slightly forward, toward the television set. The house on the screen is about to splinter and fall.

At the precise instant the house breaks apart and falls into the floodwater, Maria speaks.

MARIA

Then don't get it.

The television picture changes to a helicopter shot of a dam about to break. There is a single house beneath its cracking face.

CARTER

I've never been much impressed with catatonia as a life style.

Maria still stares at the screen. There is now a split-screen picture: on the one side, the dam breaking and washing out the house. On the other, a woman in a bathrobe smiling and talking to an interviewer. The sound is still off.

MARIA

Watch this. That's her house.

CARTER

I'm not interested in her house.

MARIA

You know what she's saying?

61 CONTINUED: (2) 61

CARTER
What's she saying.

MARIA
She's saying... 'You boys are doing a really outstanding camera job.'

CARTER
How do you know what she's saying?

Maria's eyes are still on the screen.

MARIA
I saw it at five and at seven.

CUT TO:

62 EXT. HOLLYWOOD ROOSEVELT HOTEL - DAY 62

Benny Austin is waiting for the airport bus to begin loading. Maria has come to say goodbye. She is wearing a raincoat and scarf and looks as pale and disheveled as she has through this whole Fountain Avenue period.

Benny riffles a pack of cards as he talks. Like all travellers, his attention has already been transferred to his next stop.

BENNY
Franchise services, that's where the future lies. Take your mother's rib dinners. You got her receipt, you could clean up.

MARIA
You think I should open a rib house.

BENNY
Honey, I'm talking about a quantity operation. Franchises, you rent out your name and your receipt. You could just rent yourself the bridal suite right here in the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel and let the checks roll in.

Maria laughs and takes Benny's arm, like a little girl. She is infinitely touched by him.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA

We'll do it together sometime, Benny.

BENNY

Sure, honey, you bet. Quantity. Volume. Strictly take-out. The mistake your dad and I made with the restaurant in Silver Wells was, no volume.

Maria laughs and Benny laughs with her, although he is not quite sure why. They are very close.

MARIA

There weren't any people in Silver Wells.

BENNY

You ever hear about better mousetraps?

The bus is now loading. Benny puts the cards in his pocket and picks up his suitcase. He gives Maria a hug.

BENNY

(continuing)

Take care of yourself, honey. Your mom and dad would be very proud to see you. I'm behind you all the way.

MARIA

(suddenly)

I'm getting a divorce.

BENNY

Whatever you want, honey.

Benny is getting on the bus. Maria catches at his hand.

MARIA

Let me know where you are --

BENNY

Next time I'm over we'll paint the town.

The bus door closes. Maria smiles and waves, at the wrong window. As the bus pulls away she waves one last time, then lets her hand drop.

CUT TO:

63 INT. THE BISTRO - DAY 63

Helene is sitting at a table. She already has a drink. Maria is just being seated.

HELENE
Day of days, Maria. We'll be late.

Even as Helene chides Maria, she is smiling and acknowledging two women at another table.

HELENE
(continuing)
Allene, it's been too long.
(to Maria)
Allene Walsh has a new friend, watch the action.

ANGLE ON THE OTHER TABLE

One of the women is spooning food into the other's mouth.

MARIA
She's an actress named Sharon Carroll. I worked with her once. She kept a dildo in her dressing room.

HELENE
Allene Walsh has more dildoes around her house than anybody I ever knew.
(to the waiter)
Vodka rocks.
(to Maria)
Look at my new ring.

Helene exhibits a square emerald that covers one finger to the knuckle.

HELENE
(continuing)
From Carlotta. A bribe. Because I told her I was going to spend the spring in London instead of out at the location with BZ.

Helene studies the emerald.

HELENE
(continuing)
Speaking of which, he's rented the most unspeakable house out there. Everybody else is staying in the motel. But BZ says motels make him feel *deracinated*.
(a beat)
What he means is he can't shuttle his *friends* in and out like the dailies.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED: 63

Maria is buttering a piece of bread. Her only response to Helene's monologue is to press the knife so hard on the thin pumpernickel that the bread breaks and the butter smears on her fingers. Helene watches her wipe the butter off.

HELENE
(continuing)
This isn't any excuse for you to fall apart, Maria. I mean, a divorce. I've done it twice.

MARIA
I thought only once.

Helen is intent upon her reflection in the mirror behind the table. She traces a line with one finger from her chin to her temple. For an instant her face loses its animation.

HELENE
Twice. BZ says once because that's what he told Carlotta.
(still intent upon her face)
You can really tell.

MARIA
Tell what?

HELENE
(her voice is still flat but her interest seems revived)
Tell I haven't done my Laszlo in three days.

CUT TO:

64 INT. SANTA MONICA DIVORCE COURT - DAY 64

Maria, Helene, and Maria's lawyer on one side of the aisle; Carter and his lawyer on the other side.

The courtroom is empty except for them, the judge, the stenographer and other court personnel.

Maria's LAWYER is standing and murmuring in the direction of the bench.

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED: 64

MARIA'S LAWYER

On the behalf of my client, Mrs. Maria Lang, who herewith submits aforesaid petition for dissolution of the marriage contracted between herself and the aforesaid Carter Lang in the State of New York, County of...

We lose most of the lawyer's words. Maria sits very still. Helene stirs restlessly beside her, her eyes on Carter.

Finally Helene leans across Maria and attracts Carter's attention. Her speech, a stage whisper, overrides the lawyer's murmuring.

HELENE

Carter.

Carter turns toward Helene.

HELENE
(continuing)

Puzzle of the week. Guess which two dykes were seen feeding each other cheese souffle in the Bistro today.

CUT TO:

65 FILM CLIP 65

Another clip from the film "Maria."

Maria in the New York brownstone apartment. She is spreading the contents of a jewelry box in front of her. There is nothing spectacular: the usual things a girl in New York might have, plus a small chamois bag.

Maria empties the chamois bag and a few rings fall out. She places the rings on her hand.

MARIA

These were my mother's rings. The silver one is from Mexico. She always wanted to see Mexico. She also wanted to see Honolulu and... uh, Paris.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED: 65

MARIA (cont'd)

She used to enter all these contests where the prize was two weeks in Paris. One time I saved enough money to give her a trip to Paris, but... then she was dead.

Maria pulls the rings off her hand and begins speaking very rapidly, as if to change the subject.

MARIA
(continuing)

Here's a song my mother sang all the time.

Maria does not look at the camera as she sings.

MARIA
(continuing;
singing)

Fly the ocean in a silver plane...
See the jungle when it's wet with rain..
Just remember, darling...

CUT TO:

66 EXT. KATE'S HOSPITAL - DAY 66

Outside Bluebird Cottage. Dull sunlight, wind. A palm tree in the playground has been hung with aluminum-foil ornaments, a travesty of a Christmas tree.

On a bench outside the cottage door sit the nurse, Kate, and two other children. Each child is bundled warmly and holds a shopping bag of belongings, as if waiting for parents.

Maria approaches the cottage. The nurse speaks to Kate. Kate does not move. Maria stands, waiting.

Finally Kate, her head hung low, her blue reefer coat misbuttoned, walks the few steps to Maria. Maria kneels and unbuttons her coat, then rebuttons it.

Over this is Maria's voice, as if continued from the film clip above:

MARIA (v.o.)

When my mother died my father wrote me a letter. This is how it ended:

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED: 66

MARIA (v.o. cont'd)
(reciting, in a rapid monotone, as if she knows the words by heart)
'You might call this a bad hand but God if there is one, and Honey I sincerely believe there must be Some Higher Power, never meant it to set you back in your plans. Don't let anybody bluff you because believe me you're holding all the aces.'
(her voice changes)
I mean, maybe I was holding all the aces, but what was the game?

CUT TO:

67 EXT. FOUNTAIN AVENUE APARTMENT - DAY 67

Maria gets out of her car and lifts Kate into her arms. Kate, still in her reefer coat, is asleep. Maria walks, carrying Kate, from her car through the patio. Her face is radiant.

Sitting on the patio in the dull sunlight are the old woman from the laundry room, the apartment manager, and a young HUSTLER FRIEND of the manager's. The manager and the hustler both wear sun reflectors and wrap-around sunglasses.

Among the tatty tropical foliage on the patio is a creche with a red-nosed reindeer.

Maria pauses as she passes the sunbathers. She seems very happy with Kate in her arms.

MARIA
This is my daughter. She's going to be with me...
(to the manager)
Just for Christmas.

MANAGER
Any longer would be a definite no-no.

HUSTLER
(mincing to humiliate the manager)
Oh, a definite no-no.

(CONTINUED)

67 CONTINUED: 67

OLD WOMAN
(without much interest)
She's the picture of Ginger Rogers.

Maria, in the face of their united disinterest, walks on to her door. She fumbles with the lock. Behind her, dialogue to be almost lost:

HUSTLER
(still making fun
of the manager)
Let's have a definite yes-yes.

MANAGER
I'm going to send you back to the Rexall.

HUSTLER
Any time. Any time at all.

OLD WOMAN
The Rexall is having a special on B-Complex.

Maria opens her door.

CUT TO:

68 INT. FOUNTAIN AVENUE APARTMENT - DAY 68

Maria lets herself in and closes the door. She sits down in a chair, Kate still in her arms. Very slowly she begins to unbutton Kate's reefer.

Kate stirs in her arms, crying. The radiance is gone from Maria's face. Staring straight ahead she begins to hum:

MARIA
Just remember, darling, all the while...
You belong to me.

CUT TO:

69 INT. MARIA'S APARTMENT - FULL SCREEN - DAY 69

A Christmas parade on television sponsored by a town in the San Fernando Valley, e.g., Canoga Park. Floats, fife and drum corps, minor co-stars waving at the crowd from the backs of open convertibles. For a moment, until the CAMERA PULLS BACK it is as if the pageant is live foreground action.

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: 69

1ST ANNOUNCER (v.o.)
The always popular Yuletide favorite "Winter Wonderland" played by the fife and drum corps of Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church right here in Canoga Park.

2ND ANNOUNCER (v.o.)
Coming up the grand prize winning Knights of Columbus float in this year's annual Canoga Park Christmas parade.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Kate, watching the TV set, surrounded by presents and large stuffed animals. She is playing with a small Mexican mirror, intent on catching the TV's reflection in the glass. The announcers' voices overlap.

1ST ANNOUNCER (v.o.)
Before we see that beautiful K of C float, Norm, we should say that the stunning green and gold uniforms worn by the boys and girls of Immaculate's fife and drum corps were provided by Cormier Chevrolet...

2ND ANNOUNCER (v.o.)
... largest Chevrolet dealer in the San Fernando Valley. And now how about that K of C float.

1ST ANNOUNCER (v.o.)
A veritable spirit of Christmas.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Carter, turning off the sound of the TV set. He is dressed as if he has just stopped by the Fountain Avenue apartment on his way to somewhere else. He is wearing a jacket and tie.

CARTER
Veritable.

CARTER'S POV - THE APARTMENT

The CAMERA takes in the seedy furnishing and stops at the tiny meagerly decorated Christmas tree.

(CONTINUED)

MARIA
My next move will be to Canoga
Park.

The tone is quiet and conversational. There is between Carter and Maria a mutual residual sense of something lost.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Kate still playing with the mirror. It still catches the parade on TV.

MARIA
(continuing)
She really likes it. Where'd you
get it?

Carter kneels and picks up each of Kate's presents in turn -- toys, stuffed animals, a long dress.

CARTER
Olvera Street.

MARIA
It's the only thing she's looked at.

Carter picks up a giant over-stuffed bear.

CARTER
Carlotta?

MARIA
Carlotta gave her a Savings Bond.

Carter starts to laugh. For a moment they almost reach each other.

CARTER
What have you been doing?

MARIA
Well, we drove down to look at
the tree on top of the Capitol
Record tower.

CARTER
What else?

MARIA
And BZ comes by sometimes.

CARTER
Don't get into that.

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: (3) 69

The moment is gone.

MARIA
He's your friend.

Attuned to the threat of voices not even raised, Kate screams and shatters the mirror against the television set. Maria picks her up and holds her.

CARTER
All right. I didn't tell you.
Stay here. Kill yourself. Do
something interesting like that.

CUT TO:

69 CONTINUED: (3) 69

~~CARTER~~
~~You could have gone to Helene's. You could have been with friends.~~

~~MARIA~~
~~Friends.~~

~~CARTER~~
~~You don't have any friends. You don't count anyone as a friend unless you'r fucking him.~~

~~ANOTHER ANGLE - KATE~~

~~Attuned to the threat of voices not even raised, she screams and shatters the mirror against the still playing television set. Maria picks her up and holds her.~~

~~MARIA~~
~~Then I guess I don't have any friends.~~

CUT TO:

70 INT. SILVERLAKE BUNGALOW - DAY 70

Maria and L. Kerensky. Kerensky is again standing over the floor furnace.

KERENSKY
Maybe next week.

MARIA
I'm not coming next week. I can't come any more.

Kerensky shrugs. He watches Maria open her bag and take out her car keys.

KERENSKY
You realize it doesn't prove anything.

MARIA
What doesn't.

KERENSKY
That you couldn't open enough doors to get back. Your failure. One person's failure proves nothing.

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED: 70

Maria crumples a twenty-dollar bill and thrusts it at Kerensky. Kerensky's hands are folded behind him. He rocks slightly on his heels. He does not reach for the bill.

KERENSKY
Some people resist. Some people don't want to know.

CUT TO:

71 EXT. LOWER SUNSET BOULEVARD - DAY 71

Maria pulls into the empty parking lot of the New Havana Ballroom. She stops the car at an angle across three or four parking spaces, gets out, and almost runs toward the entrance.

CUT TO:

72 INT. NEW HAVANA BALLROOM - DAY 72

Maria on the pay phone in the bar. The bar is empty except for the bartender, who regards Maria with sullen suspicion throughout the scene, and a black kid with a rag tied around his forehead who is punching buttons on the jukebox.

Maria is speaking into the telephone but her eyes are on the bartender and the young black. She looks cornered in the open booth.

MARIA
Carter Lang, please... This is Mrs. Lang, may I speak to, uh, Carter, please... Well, could you get him out of the meeting, please. It's urgent.

Maria waits holding the telephone. The black now begins a lewd dance in front of Maria's booth. Carter is finally on the phone.

MARIA
(continuing)
Carter...
(she waits)
Nothing's the matter with me... I just wanted to talk to... someone.

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED: 72

It is as if she has realized that she has nothing at all to say.

MARIA
(continuing)
... I know you're busy... I know you're going on location Tuesday ... I don't know... Maybe I'll go to Maine Chance... What do people usually do at Maine Chance? Firm up the muscle tone. Get a mud pack.

Maria stares at the black and his dance step. Her line is as much to him as it is to Carter.

MARIA
(continuing)
Forget it.

She hangs up the telephone. The black jostles Maria slightly as she maneuvers past him. He follows her to the car. She begins to walk faster.

CUT TO:

73 EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - DAY 73

Maria getting into her car in the empty parking lot, slamming the door closed.

The young black leans through the car window.

BLACK
All I want's a cigarette.

Maria shoves a package of cigarettes into his hands and tries to roll up the window.

BLACK
(continuing)
You think I'm trying to put the make on you, I'm not. Let me tell you, you're too old.

His face close to the closed window as Maria starts the car.

BLACK
(continuing)
Also, I don't go for Jews.

CUT TO:

74 INT. FOUNTAIN AVENUE APARTMENT - DAY 74

Maria stands alone in the living room of the apartment, near the front door. The door is open. Maria is dressed for leaving. The phone begins to RING. BZ exits the bedroom carrying two of Maria's suitcases. As Maria makes no move to pick up the phone, BZ puts down the suitcases and answers the phone.

BZ
(into phone)
Hello... No, she's not, I'll take a message.
(to Maria)
Beverly Hills Pharmacy
(a beat)
Dr. Windsor will not renew the Valium prescription.
(a beat)
Dr. Friedrich will not renew the phenobarbital.
(a beat)
And Dr. Silver will not renew the Librium... Okay.

BZ hangs up the phone. He picks up the suitcases and starts for the open door. As he passes Maria, he says:

BZ
(continuing)
You struck out.

CUT TO:

74A EXT. APARTMENT PATIO - DAY 74A

Maria trails BZ, who is carrying the suitcases, along the patio. The apartment manager catches up to them.

MANAGER
Mrs. Lang. I hate to see you go. You've been a perfect tenant. Unlike some I could name.
(to BZ)
3-F.
(back to Maria)
But dear, you haven't been here three months, you'll have to forfeit your cleaning deposit, I really am sorry.

MARIA
That's all right.

(CONTINUED)

74A CONTINUED: 74A

MANAGER
Who does Carter want for the picture?

BZ
Judy Garland.

CUT TO:

74B EXT. FOUNTAIN AVENUE APARTMENT - DAY 74B

BZ and Maria approach BZ's car, which is parked on the street. Maria gets into the car and turns on the car radio, while BZ loads the suitcases into the back. BZ gets into the car, turns down the radio and looks at Maria.

BZ
All right, you're out of that.
What game you want to play next?

CUT TO:

75 INT. BZ'S BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT 75

BZ, Helene, Maria and Carlotta in the bar. A movie screen covers the far window.

BZ is threading the projector.

Carlotta sits in front of the screen playing cards.

Helene is behind the bar getting a drink, while Maria sits at a bar stool.

ANGLE ON HELENE AND MARIA

HELENE
The reason my hair looks this way is Pedro's in New York for ten days. Did I tell you?

MARIA
Three times.

HELENE
I don't mind if I'm out of town, but if I'm in town and Jay's not ... who was that who called during dinner?

(CONTINUED)

MARIA
Someone's leg man.

HELENE
Whose?

MARIA
Some columnist, I don't know.

HELENE
What did he want?

MARIA
He wanted to know if I was dating anyone in particular. He also wanted to know what I thought of Carter's dating Susannah.

HELENE
You knew that.

MARIA
Dating. I mean it's just a funny word.

Helene studies her hair in a hand mirror.

HELENE
If I'm in town and Pedro's not... I feel almost... frightened.

She looks at Maria.

HELENE
(continuing)
I don't suppose you'd understand that.

Helene takes her drink and comes out from behind the bar. She sits down beside Carlotte.

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE SCREEN

The lights go off. The credit sequence of ANGEL BEACH appears on the film. It is the same footage previously seen in Scene 13. There is a closeup of Maria in frame.

CARLOTTA
She looks years younger, I must say.

HELENE
A week at La Costa and she'd look that way again.

75 CONTINUED: (2) 75

CARLOTTA

The eyes go first.

HELENE

The elbows.

Abruptly Maria picks up some cigarettes from the bar and walks outside, through the projector beam, interrupting the image on screen. BZ watches her a beat. The film continues.

CUT TO:

76 EXT. BZ'S BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT 76

Maria sits on the sundeck in the dark. She is all nerves, staring out to sea. On the table beside her are the loose cigarettes and a telephone. BZ exits the house and sits across from her. He lights a cigarette. The film still running inside. They do not speak for a moment. BZ finally breaks the silence.

BZ
What ever happened to that
Guatemalan?

MARIA
What Guatemalan?

BZ
The maid. The one who stole
your diaphragm.

MARIA
She's working in a massage parlor.
(a beat)
In the Valley.

The conversation is rambling, desultory, playing against the gang-bang footage of ANGEL BEACH. Maria does not watch it. BZ occasionally does.

BZ
You know the aaddest people in
the world.

MARIA
You do.

BZ
For example.

MARIA
For example what's wrong with
Helene.

BZ
For example you make her feel
old.

We hear the noise of ANGEL BEACH against the crashing surf.

CUT TO:

77 EXT. BEACH HOUSE SUNDECK - NIGHT 77

Maria lies on a chaise on BZ's sundeck, a blanket pulled over her, in much the same way as she was at her Beverly Hills pool-house in scene 14.

77 CONTINUED: 77

There are cigarettes, pills, a wine glass on the table beside her. The beach in front of the house is floodlit. MUSIC is playing. A helicopter passes overhead, the SOUND of its roters first LOUD, then disappearing, The surf CRASHES.

THE CAMERA HOLDS ON MARIA.

The lights are turned off in the house one by one. The last light is the beach floodlight. The record is TURNED OFF in mid-note.

CUT TO:

78 EXT. BZ'S BEACH HOUSE - DAY 78

BZ and Maria on the sundeck. Maria lies face down in the sun, her bathing suit straps pulled down. BZ lies on a chaise, the sun glinting off his dark glasses. Their mood is light, bright.

BZ
What are you going to do while we're on location?

MARIA
Buy a Yorkshire. Carry it around Beverly Hills. Into Maginin's. Saks. The Polo Lounge for lunch.

BZ
You wouldn't do that.

MARIA
No, I wouldn't do that.

BZ
Anything else you wouldn't do?

MARIA
A lot of things.

BZ
(drawing it out mockingly)
Sado-masochism?

MARIA
Not unless I wanted to.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED: 78

BZ
Deal?

MARIA
Never. Never deal. Never go to the Luau.

BZ
What else?

MARIA
I'd never walk through the Sands, or Caesar's alone after midnight. And I'd never borrow furs from a store to wear to a party. I would never... ball at a party.

BZ
You ever get paid for it?

MARIA
No.

BZ
I did. Once.

CUT TO:

78A EXT. BZ'S SUN DECK - DAY 78A

BZ is playing gin rummy with Larry Kulik. The girl from Scenes 9 and 24, THE CHICKIE, stands behind Larry Kulik, rubbing suntan oil over his back and shoulders.

Maria lies on the chaise reading the I Ching book.

LARRY KULIK
Gin. What have you got.

BZ
Thirty-two.

LARRY KULIK
I figure you're into me seven grand already.

BZ checks the sky.

BZ
Winning becomes you, Larry.

Larry ignores this and begins to shuffle the cards.

(CONTINUED)

78A CONTINUED: 78A

LARRY KULIK
(to the chickie)
A little on the shoulders, darling.
(to BZ)
My barber gets this stuff in Paris.
(again to the chickie)
Pronto, wicki-wicki.
(to Maria)
You were going to come over and use the sauna.

Maria looks up from the I Ching book.

MARIA
I've been...

LARRY KULIK
So I hear.

MARIA
Hear what?

LARRY KULIK
Hear you're ready for a nuthouse, you want to know.

MARIA
You think I need a sauna.

LARRY KULIK
I think you need something.

Larry checks his hand.

LARRY KULIK
(continuing)
I'm a good friend to people I like. Think it over.
(to BZ)
How do you keep your tan?

BZ
I stay in season.

CUT TO:

78B EXT. BZ'S SUN DECK - NIGHT 78B

Maria lies out on the deck as she did in Scene 77. We are aware of her lying in the chaise, but we never actually see her. She is just a presence on the deck.

(CONTINUED)

78B CONTINUED: 78B

THE CAMERA SHOOTS PAST HER INTO THE HOUSE.

We see BZ walking through the house turning out lights. He is drinking a glass of wine. He stands framed in the door. He knows Maria is outside, but says nothing. He turns out the last light. We are still aware that he is in the doorway. Finally:

BZ
You want anything?

MARIA
No.

BZ
I have some nembutal.

MARIA
Nothing.

CUT TO:

79 INT. FLAMINGO HOTEL, LAS VEGAS - NIGHT 79

A crap table at the Flamingo. Benny Austin, in the same worn suit and lariat tie clasp, stands at the table playing. Maria stands with her back to the action, holding some chips in her hand. Benny continues to place bets, his eyes intent on the action, as he talks to Maria. Maria's attention seems somewhere else, as if she is watching for someone she wants not to see.

BENNY
I'm into zinc. Very confidential still.

Maria drops a few chips on the line, almost without looking. Benny moves them instantly to the field.

BENNY
(continuing)
Jesus, honey, you forget all we taught you?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED: 79

BENNY (cont'd)
(back to his theme)
That's why it's lucky I ran into you, I'm moving around right now. Here. There.

Maria is watching across the room.

ANOTHER ANGLE, MARIA'S POV

Larry Kulik has seen Maria and is making his way toward the table.

BENNY
(continuing)
Picked up some rights out by Blue Mountain today.

MARIA
Benny, I have to --

BENNY
Shhh. We're with the shooter, don't blow his roll.

Maria is obviously trying to get away before Larry Kulik reaches the table. Benny is intent on the roll. The roll is made. Benny picks up Maria's chips, tripled by the roll, and hands them to her. Maria smiles.

Their lines overlap.

BENNY
You even play craps like your mother did. You don't think.

Maria hands Benny her chips.

MARIA
Play these for me. I'll be right back.

CUT TO:

80 INT. FLAMINGO SUITE BEDROOM - NIGHT 80

Maria sits on the bed holding the telephone to her ear, waiting.

MARIA
(into the
telephone)
Could you please page Mr. Benny
Austin. Austin. Benny Austin.

She waits. There are two fresh drinks on the telephone table. She takes a drink of one of them. Music and voices can be HEARD.

Larry Kulik walks out of the bathroom, naked to the waist. He takes a clean shirt from the suitcase and puts it on.

LARRY KULIK
You get me a drink?

Maria hands him the other glass.

MARIA
(into the
telephone)
Try once more.

LARRY KULIK
Ask him up. Guys like that
interest me, you'd be surprised.

MARIA
I wouldn't be surprised at all.

LARRY KULIK
(fastening cuff
links in his
French cuffs)
Who knows, maybe he needs a favor.

Maria ignores Larry Kulik. She bites one fingernail like a child.

MARIA
(into phone)
Benny? I didn't just leave you,
I got sick, I --

There is INTERCUTTING between Maria and Benny, who has been paged to a house phone among the slots.

BENNY
Christ, Maria, I knew you wouldn't
run out on me, I changed your
diapers.
(MORE)

80 CONTINUED: 80

BENNY (cont'd)
You should've said you were sick, I got a good friend, house doctor at the Nugget.

Larry Kulik, finished dressing, kisses Maria's neck and walks to the door on Maria's next line. As he opens the door and goes into the living room of the suite we HEAR more of the music and voices in the next room. He closes the door behind him.

MARIA
I just need some rest. Benny? Can you hear me? Listen. You remember the last time I was out before Mother died? I was out from New York and you and Mother and Daddy put me on the plane at McCarran? And before that we opened Christmas presents at the house? Remember?

BENNY
(he does not remember)
Sure, honey, you bet.

MARIA
Benny -- where can I reach you? Can I see you tomorrow? Maybe we can... play some blackjack?

BENNY
Yeah, blackjack... Listen, next time I'm in L.A. we'll tie one on for your Mom and Dad. I'll see you, honey. Keep moving.

Benny rings off.

MARIA
Benny? Benny?

Maria puts down the telephone, stares a moment at a large oil painting of a harlequin, then walks into the other room.

CUT TO:

81 INT. LARRY KULIK'S SUITE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 81

There are a number of people in the room, including Larry Kulik, a couple of well-manicured gangsters, several girls and BZ and Helene.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED: 81

A Cuban hooker is dancing with Larry Kulik as Maria comes down the stairs. The Hooker breaks off and passes Maria on her way to the bar to pick up a drink. DIALOGUE OVERLAPS.

CUBAN
All yours, chiquita.

HELENE
I thought we were going to see Jo-Jo's midnight show.

BZ
It's over.
(to Maria)
What about you, chiquita? What do you think we're going to do?

Maria picks up her drink. She indicates the room and speaks sotto voce to BZ, while looking and smiling at someone else as she speaks.

MARIA
I didn't expect to see you here. I thought you'd be out at the location.

BZ
I'm incorrigibly Vegas.

MARIA
I like the good talk.

A Comedian and his entourage are just coming down the stairs into the suite. The Comic's name is Jo-Jo. Jo-Jo enters doing a pantomime about needing a drink.

HELENE
Jo-Jo, the midnight show was heaven.

Jo-Jo moves by one of the girls, first feeling her breast, then patting her cheek. He is looking Maria over.

JO-JO
New talent.

LARRY KULIK
She's not talent.

BZ
Larry regards her with the deepest respect.

Jo-Jo, to the assembled guests, loudly, a schtick.

81 CONTINUED: (2) 81

JO-JO

Larry regards her with the deepest respect. A convent girl. House of the Good shepherd.

(he squeezes Maria's cheek)

Honey, how are you?

CUT TO:

82 INT. LARRY KULIK'S BEDROOM - DAY (THIS IS NEW SCENE 82)82

Early morning. The CAMERA IS CLOSE on Maria. She lies naked in the bed. A sheet is pulled over her. She has just opened her eyes. She stares at the ceiling for a moment, as if she deliberately wants to limit her range of vision, as if some instinct tells her not to explore this situation.

phone ring first.

Finally, with great deliberation, she looks around the bedroom.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Larry Kulik is not in evidence. The room is a shambles, full of glasses, a flower pot that has been knocked over, ashtrays spilled on the floor, clothes, men and women's strewn over chairs, doorknobs, etc, a mattress pulled off a bed and laying on the floor.

Maria closes her eyes.

The phone begins to ring. Maria regards it as if it were a snake. Finally she reaches for it, as she might a rattler.

MARIA

Hello.

VOICE

This is the desk. Mr. Kulik said to tell you he's out playing golf. He said for you to charge anything you want.

MARIA

Thank you.

Maria hangs up the telephone. She touches her face as if she is unsure of finding its outlines intact. Then she reaches around the bed for something to wear. She finds a bathrobe. The initials "L.K." are embroidered on the breast pocket.

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED: 82

Maria puts the bathrobe on. She gets out of bed.

CUT TO:

82A INT. LARRY KULIK'S LIVING ROOM - ANGLE ON MARIA - DAY 82A

She is on the stairs, barefoot and wearing the robe. No one sees her at first.

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE LIVING ROOM

Like the bedroom, a kind of shambles. Glasses, cigarette butts, clothes, pillows on the floor.

Helene sits on a couch, cradling herself in her arms as if she needs heat, or solace. She is wearing a bathrobe like the one Maria has on, with the same "L.K." monogram.

BZ is dressed and more or less pulled together. He pours a glass of orange juice and hands it out to Helene. She makes no move to take it. He sets it beside her. There is a tension between them.

A GIRL from the party the night before is at the wet bar. She is wearing a bath sheet and her hair is pinned up. Her insouciance about what has gone on in the suite is in marked contrast to Helene's condition.

GIRL
You'd think he'd at least keep some yoghurt in the fridge. You know the only thing he's got in here? A box of Compazine suppositories.

HELENE
(without interest)
Is that right.

BZ pours himself a glass of orange juice as the Girl saunters past.

GIRL
Compazine 25. Anyone for some music?

The girl turns on the record player and moves toward the corridor and a bedroom.

(CONTINUED)

She is half-whistling and moving half in time to her whistle, not quite dancing, just moving sinuously.

GIRL
Love Bossa Nova. I'm going to have some yoghurt sent up.

The girl disappears into the corridor, dropping the bath sheet as she goes. After she is gone, BZ turns off the music, says to Helene, in a matter-of-fact voice:

BZ
Get her out of here.

Helene looks up.

HELENE
You started it.

Maria, coming tentatively into the living room, speaks uncertainly.

MARIA
Who's that girl?

HELENE
You ought to know.

BZ
No personalities, Helene, all right?

MARIA
I think I drank too much last night.

Helene looks at her. Her voice is soft and vague, her eyes are puffy and there is a small bruise on her cheekbone.

HELENE
Don't talk about it.

MARIA
I just said --

HELENE
And don't say you don't remember, either.

BZ looks at Helene. His voice is gentle but he is talking from a place beyond pity or terror.

(CONTINUED)

82A CONTINUED: (2) 82A

BZ

Helene is experiencing... a little hangover terror. A few second thoughts. That about the size of it?

MARIA

(as if by rote, almost to no one at all)

I have to get out of here. I have to go somewhere.

BZ is still looking steadily at Helene. His line is flat and harsh but somehow compassionate.

BZ

(to Helene)

If you can't deal with the morning, stay out of the game.

CUT TO:

83 INT. FLAMINGO LOBBY - DAY 83

Maria is renting a car at the rental desk. One of the bellboys is filling out the form, and eating a bagel smeared with cream cheese. There is early-morning Muzak, and a middle-aged man running an electric broom around the carpet.

BELLBOY
Occupation?

MARIA
Actress.

The bellboy, who is all low Vegas cunning, clearly doubts this. He smiles slightly.

BELLBOY
Employer?

MARIA
Self-employed.

The bellboy flicks the crumbs from the bagel onto the freshly vacuumed carpet, ans fastidiously wipes a bit of cream cheese from his fingers with a See Hoover Dam folder.

BELLBOY
So what if I just put down...
independently wealthy.

CUT TO:

84 EXT. FLAMINGO - DAY 84

Maria stands on the pavement waiting for the rented car to be brought around.

There is that dead morning look to the Strip, the lights still going and the mountains floating in the clear air behind Caesar's Palace. The quintessential landscape of dread.

The car is there. Maria tips the parking boy, gets in, and drives the few yards to the exit onto the Strip. There she stops, and idles the engine a moment. Then she shoots out onto the Strip.

CUT TO:

85 EXT. STREET ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF LAS VEGAS - DAY 85

One of those streets east of town where the gas stations and Taco Bells are just giving way to the mesquite.

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED: 85

An old house trailer sits back off the street, surrounded by mesquite, a shed, piles of weathered lumber and rusted iron, and a couple of dormant hound dogs.

Maria parks the rented car, gets out, and walks up toward the house trailer.

CUT TO:

86 EXT. TRAILER - DAY 86

Maria stands at the door to the house trailer.

A man about Benny Austin's age has just opened the door. He is FRANK. Behind Frank in the trailer we can see a younger woman, about 28 or 29, wearing a cheap robe. She has a very good figure and an Okie face and her hair is in rollers. She is JEANELLE.

Frank looks Maria over.

FRANK
What can I do for you?

JEANELLE
(from inside the trailer, shrill)
Watch she isn't Luanne's foster mother.

FRANK
Shut up, Jeanelle.

MARIA
I'm Harry Wyeth's daughter.

FRANK
(trying to remember)
Francine.

MARIA
That was my mother. I'm Maria.
(a beat)
They used to bring me with them? When they came to visit you? And Benny Austin came with us?

Frank lunges for a poodle trying to escape from the trailer.

FRANK
Benny and I worked pit at the Nugget together.

(CONTINUED)

86 CONTINUED: 86

The poodle is yelping at the sleeping hounds. Jeanelle pushes past Frank and goes after it.

JEANELLE
You just stand here, you let
Chi-Chi out.

MARIA
I thought you might know where
I could find him.

FRANK
Long time passing, honey.

MARIA
I just ~~wondered.~~ wanted to find him.

FRANK
He had a franchise chicken place
in Henderson a while but I heard
it went bust.

The hounds are barking now. Frank's attention is there. To Jeanelle, who is trying to pick up the poodle:

FRANK
(continuing)
Get that creature away from the
dogs.

MARIA
It's all right. Thank you.

Frank is already moving toward the dogs and Jeanelle.

FRANK
Tell your dad I still owe him
a Daniels or two.

CUT TO:

87 EXT. HENDERSON - DAY 87

Maria turns off the Boulder Highway and parks in the lot of a rundown complex of buildings. Mesquite blows across the parking area. There is a bowling alley, a Stop-and-Pray church, and a boarded-up chicken franchise. There are only a few other cars in the lot.

Six or seven bikers are pulled up in the lot. They wear sleeveless Levi jackets, emblazoned with their colors, and dark goggles. They are lounging around their bikes, passing bottles of Ripple.

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED: 87

They watch Maria as she gets out of her car, walks up to the boarded-up chicken franchise, and then walks on toward the bowling alley.

CUT TO:

88 INT. BOWLING ALLEY - DAY 88

Maria stands at the cash register, talking to the cashier. The CASHIER is uncommunicative, and middle-aged.

CASHIER
I don't know any Benny person.

MARIA
I just thought he might still come around.

CASHIER
I only been here two weeks.

MARIA
Maybe if he does come round, you could... give him a note for me?

CASHIER
You got a process to serve, honey, you serve it in person.

CUT TO:

89 EXT. HENDERSON - DAY 89

Maria exits bowling alley and sits on a picnic bench outside the chicken franchise. She lights a cigarette. She is looking across the parking lot to where her car and a few other cars are parked.

The bikers are trying various keys in the locks of one of the cars. They finally get a door open. They rifle the glove compartment.

They move on to the next car: Maria's. They watch Maria as they try the keys, as if daring her to stop them.

Maria stands up and throws down her cigarette. Very slowly she walks toward her car. The mesquite blows around her legs.

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED: 89

As she gets close to the car, the bikers melt into a semi-circle to one side of it. Her eyes steady, moving with extreme deliberation, Maria unlocks the door under their blank gaze and slides into the driver's seat. As she turns the key in the ignition she stares directly at each of the bikers, one by one.

It is an instant of total complicity. One of the bikers leans across the hood and raises his hand, palm out, inscribing an arc in recognition of what has just passed between them.

CUT TO:

90 INT. FLAMINGO LOBBY - NIGHT 90

Maria walks up to the key desk.

MARIA
702, please.

The CLERK is making entries in a book. He does not look up as he speaks.

CLERK
He took the noon flight back to L.A., honey.

He looks up then, having made his point.

CLERK
(continuing)
He said you could use the suite.

He takes a key from the board and hands it to Maria.

CLERK
(continuing)
For one night.

CUT TO:

91 INT. FLAMINGO SUITE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 91

Maria stands staring out the window, down at the harsh unearthly light shed by the arc lamps over a Strip crosswalk.

Behind her a BOY from room service is setting down a tray with a sandwich and a glass of milk. He finishes, and waits.

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED: 91

BOY
(after a beat)
Anything else I can get you?

Maria turns, picks up a bill from a table and hands it to him. She picks up half the sandwich and turns back to the window. The boy still lingers.

BOY
(continuing)
Pretty early still.

MARIA
(flat, neutral)
Pretty early for what?

BOY
Lots of guys around.

Maria continues eating the sandwich and staring out the window. Her voice when she speaks is still neutral.

MARIA
I don't know any.

BOY
I could make an introduction. We could both make a piece of change.

Maria puts down the sandwich and looks directly at him for the first time.

MARIA
Here. In an hour.

BOY
Hundred? Forty for me, the rest for you?

Maria raises her shoulders, as if to say it is up to him. She watches him leave the room. She picks up the glass of milk then and drinks it, very slowly.

After she puts the glass down she wipes her hands very carefully on the napkin, picks up her car keys, picks up her dark glasses and puts them on, and walks out of the room.

CUT TO:

92 EXT. FLAMINGO - NIGHT 92

Maria, wearing the dark glasses, walks out a side entrance. She walks past the lighted pool and out into the floodlit parking lot toward the rented car.

CUT TO:

93 EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT 93

Maria driving the rented car off the Strip and onto the freeway west. She accelerates to 80.

CUT TO:

94 EXT. TELEPHONE BOOTH ON DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT 94

The glass booth glows, the only lighted thing on the whole desolate landscape. Maria's rented car is pulled up beside it.

Maria is in the phone booth, putting a lot of coins into the telephone.

MARIA
(after a beat,
to the operator)
They've got to answer, it's an
answering service.
(another beat)
This is Maria Wyeth, Box 8, are
there any messages... nothing...
thank you.

CUT TO:

95 EXT. TECOPA, CALIFORNIA - DAY 95

The main street of a desert town in blazing sun: the same town, and what appears at first to be the same shot, that we saw on page 14. The grocery, the motel the bar, the coffee shop. The scrapped Union 76 stations. The dog wandering across the dust road. Up to this point we have seen the shot before.

Then we see Maria, driving the rented car into the town. She stops the car in front of the Enterprise Motel and Trailer Park, a low concrete-block building painted pale green. Everything in this town is concrete block and everything is painted pale green.

Maria gets out of the car.

(CONTINUED)

95 CONTINUED: 95

ANOTHER ANGLE

Down the road a way, the trucks and trailers and lights of a motion-picture location. A shot is being set up.

The motel manager, ESTELLE RITCHIE, stands out in front of the motel office, looking down the road to where the movie people are. The motel office is also where she and her husband live, and it is also the sheriff's substation for the area.

Maria walks up toward the office.

MARIA
I'm looking for Carter Lang.

Mrs. Ritchie does not take her eyes from the location. She is as if transfixed.

MRS. RITCHIE
Carter's in his room.

A pause.

MARIA
What's his room?

Mrs. Ritchie is still transfixed.

MRS. RITCHIE
Ten.

Maria walks the length of the motel to a door marked 10. The door is slightly ajar. From inside can be heard the voices of Carter and BZ. Maria hesitates a moment.

BZ
I'm telling you, Carter, they look at the dailies and they want to know why they're not seeing a master, two, close-up and reaction on every scene.

CARTER
I start covering myself that way on every scene, we'll bring it in at about two-five.

Maria pushes the door open with her foot.

CUT TO:

96 INT. CARTER'S MOTEL ROOM - DAY 96

Maria stands in the doorway, framed in the blazing sun as the door swings open.

Carter is lying on a bed. He stares at Maria. BZ has his back to the door, and does not at first see her.

BZ
Carter, we're two days head of schedule, we can afford to give them a little coverage.

MARIA
(to Carter)
I came to see you.

BZ turns around. There is a beat.

BZ
(to Carter)
Why don't I tell them to break for lunch.

Carter is still looking at Maria.

CARTER
I can get two more set-ups before lunch.

BZ picks up his script and his sun hat. He kisses Maria as he leaves.

BZ
I'll see you later, babe.

BZ leaves. Maria walks over to Carter. The bed is badly made, the room rundown. There is an open kitchenette with a small chipped refrigerator and an oilcloth-covered table. There are bottles of whiskey on the table.

The room opens onto a second room, identical, the only difference being that Carter has been using the other room as a bedroom and this room as a living room and office. In this room are scripts and schedules and boards, cans of film.

Maria stands by Carter, tentative. She picks up a towel from the bed.

MARIA
You only get two towels a week here.
(a beat)
I read it in the trades.

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED: 96

CARTER
You just came to see me.

MARIA
I just came to see you.

On Maria's line the ASSISTANT DIRECTOR appears in the open door.

ASST. DIRECTOR
We're ready with the shot, Carter.

Carter gets up. His line to the Assistant Director is venemous, as if he is taking out on him his fury at Maria.

CARTER
You could have lit World War Two in the time it's taken.

Carter picks up a script and a straw field hat and starts for the door. He does not look at Maria. She follows him.

CUT TO:

97 EXT. MAIN STREET TECOPA - DAY 97

Carter and Maria are outside the room now, walking down along the motel toward the location. Their dialogue is low and fast and deceptively casual.

CARTER
You just... happened to come to see me because you just... happened to find yourself within a hundred miles of here.

MARIA
I just happened to be in Vegas.

Carter walks very fast. Maria tries to keep up with him.

CARTER
You just happened to be in Vegas. I heard all about it.

Carter nods to Mrs. Ritchie.

CARTER
(continuing)
Morning, Mrs. Ritchie.

97 CONTINUED: 97

MRS. RITCHIE
Lester arranged it so you could use his deputy's vehicle in the movie, Carter.

Carter, still moving on, makes a circle with his thumb and forefinger in Mrs. Ritchie's direction.

MARIA
Larry Kulik is your friend.

CARTER
I never got into bed with him.

Carter calls to a cameraman who is sitting on a lowered boom.

CARTER
(continuing)
Let me look at it.

Carter gets on the boom and it rises into position. Maria stands and watches him. BZ comes up behind her and puts his hands on her shoulders. Maria says nothing.

BZ
Carter only has the edited version of our Vegas venture.

MARIA
From whom?

BZ
Helene.

MARIA
She edit herself out?

BZ
And me.

CUT TO:

98 EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE LOCATION - DAY 98

It is an hour later, at the lunch break.

Carter sits at an improvised picnic table under the shade of a single dying cottonwood and some umbrellas. He is being interviewed by a young woman with a notebook, SANDRA STEINER. Sandra is dressed as if she works out of New York.

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED: 98

Carter and Sandra sit next to each other, and Carter is sharing his lunch with her. He clearly likes interviews, but his attention is divided between the interviewer and Maria's ambiguous presence.

Maria sits down and across the table from them, not a participant. She is eating nothing.

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED: 98

SANDRA
Let's get back to that thing you said earlier... about the bike picture.

CARTER
What did I say?

SANDRA
You said...

Sandra leafs back through her notebook. Carter hands her half a sandwich.

CARTER
Don't you use a tape recorder?

Sandra looks up for a second. Her voice is quick and nervous. She takes the sandwich and puts it down.

SANDRA
No. No, I don't. Let's see...

CARTER
What if you started to write the piece and you couldn't read your notes?

SANDRA
(who is too nervous to buy Carter's diversions)
That hasn't happened to me yet. You said... that the actress in that picture... your wife...

CARTER
At that time my wife.

Sandra glances nervously at Maria.

SANDRA
... At that time, of course...
(picking up her quote again)
Was not giving a performance.

Maria stands up.

CARTER
Existentially she was giving a performance.

Maria is walking away.

CUT TO:

99 INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY 99

Maria stands at the counter of the small coffee shop, counting out change. A ceiling fan BUZZES ineffectually overhead.

PATSY, the woman who runs the coffee shop, is wrapping a hamburger.

Carter comes in. He seems in better spirits.

CARTER
What are you doing?

Maria smiles at Patsy and takes the wrapped hamburger.

MARIA
Existentially I'm getting a hamburger.

Maria walks outside onto the sheltered wooden walk that runs along the cinder block building.

CUT TO:

100 EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY 100

Maria stands on the wooden walk, unwrapping the hamburger.

Carter comes out behind her. He is trying to make tentative contact with her. His line is, although unapologetic, by way of an apology.

CARTER
You know how I am in the morning.

Maria is still unwrapping the hamburger, gray and thin in a wrinkled steamed roll. She does not look at Carter. She speaks without rancor but also without rapproachement.

MARIA
Now you've done a few interviews, you feel better.

Carter tries again.

CARTER
What are you here for?

MARIA
I thought you wanted me out here.

(CONTINUED)

100 CONTINUED: 100

CARTER
Jesus Christ, Maria. I'm shooting, I've got a forty-day schedule on a seventy-day picture, I've got a script that doesn't play, I hear my ex-wife's in Vegas with a... a...

Carter cannot even find words anymore.

MARIA
A gangster. Don't call me your ex-wife.

A beat.

CARTER
What did you come here for?

Maria looks directly at Carter.

MARIA
I don't know where else to go.

Carter looks at her a moment, then, almost with resignation, pulls her toward him. Maria stands without moving as he touches her face.

CARTER
I don't know if it's going to be any better.

MARIA
Neither do I.

CUT TO:

101 EXT. ANOTHER LOCATION - NIGHT 101

An Inyo County Sheriff's car is pulled up among the cables and generators of a night location, deep in the desert. The doors are open. BZ sits on the floorboard, his feet outside on the dirt. On the CUT he is raising a spoonful of cocaine to one nostril.

Susannah Wood, wearing a robe over her costume, sits on the dirt. Maria leans against the car. They watch Carter setting up a shot.

SUSANNAH
You know what I wish it was tonight? I wish it was New Year's Eve. Most people think New Year's Eve is a bore, but I love it.

see p95
"There's some
coke in the
trailer, Susannah

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED: 101

Maria speaks without interest. There is a sense that they have been setting up the shot for hours.

MARIA
You do?

BZ
(to Maria)
How long you going to stay out here?

Maria says nothing.

SUSANNAH
I also love Christmas.

BZ
And *then* what are you going to do?

Susannah starts to hum "Winter Wonderland".

MARIA
After Carter finishes shooting, maybe we could take Kate on a trip somewhere.

BZ
He's going to Paris for two weeks before he starts cutting. Maybe we could all go.

MARIA
I meant with Kate.

BZ takes Maria's hand. His voice is gentle. They both recognize the impossibility of Maria's dream.

BZ
~~(to Susannah)~~
There's some coke in the trailer, Susannah. Merck.

Susannah starts for the trailer. cut Merck

MARIA
She liked Honolulu. I mean, didn't she?

BZ
She did.

CUT TO:

102 EXT. THE LOCATION - DAY 102

CLOSE on a contact sheet of photographs. Carter is examining the contacts with a magnifying glass. Occasionally he marks an exposure with a grease pencil. The contacts are exclusively of Carter on location: Carter riding the boom, Carter working with Susannah, Carter blocking a scene.

A SHOT rings out, followed by Maria's laughter. Carter looks up, startled.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Maria and two stuntmen. Maria is taking a gun from one of the stuntmen and tucking it into the belt of her jeans. A row of tin cans gleam in the sun thirty or forty feet away from where Maria and the stuntmen stand.

MARIA
Even if you'd hit it you would
have been disqualified, you
didn't draw fast enough.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Susannah getting made up. The SHOT has startled her and forced her to drop the wig she was holding in her hand.

SUSANNAH
Carter, I dropped the wig.

ANOTHER ANGLE - CARTER

CARTER
(raising his
voice to reach
Maria, but dead
quiet)
What exactly do you think you're
doing?

MARIA
They don't know how to shoot.

CARTER
(quietly, as if
to a child)
Give them back the gun and get
off the set. We don't allow
live ammunition on the set.
Whoever gave it to you is going
to get fired.

The stuntmen look embarrassed at Carter's attempt to humiliate Maria. It is as if no one else is present.

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED: 102

Maria listens, then turns and fast-draws, hits one of the tin cans and hands the gun back to one of the stundmen. As she walks away, the can bounces over the alkali flat.

CUT TO:

103 INT. CARTER'S ROOM - NIGHT 103

The scene plays between both of Carter's adjoining rooms. It opens in the room he has been using as a bedroom. Carter and Maria are in bed. They lie ridigly away from each other. After a moment, Carter gets up and goes into the other room. He turns on the light and can be heard opening and then slamming the refrigerator door, tearing off the top of a can of beer, walking around the room like a caged animal. He opens a drawer and slams it closed. Then he appears at the doorway, making unnecessary noise with the door.

MARIA
I'm awake. You don't have to try and wake me up.

CARTER
I'm not trying to wake you up.

MARIA
I mean I'm not asleep.

CARTER
Why aren't you asleep?

MARIA
I don't know.
(a pause)
I'm not asleep because you've been lying here hating me for the last two hours.

CARTER
It isn't any better.

MARIA
How do you know?

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED:

Carter says nothing.

MARIA
(continuing)
I mean, we didn't even try.

CARTER
You don't want it.

MARIA
I do too.

This is now all very low-keyed. Carter speaks matter-of-factly.

CARTER
It isn't any good. It's never been any good. It's shit.

A pause.

MARIA
I'll go back to town tomorrow if you want.

HOLD a moment on Carter. He looks impassively at Maria.

CUT TO:

104 EXT. MAIN STREET TECOPA - DAY 104

BZ's car is idling in front of the motel. The trunk is up. BZ stands by the trunk while the production man loads a few cans of film into the trunk.

Maria sits in the front passenger seat. The car windows are closed, the air conditioner is on. Carter stands by the window. Without looking at Maria, he puts his hand on the closed window. Without looking at Carter, Maria puts her cheek against his hand. The window separates them.

105 EXT. A ROADSIDE TRINKET STAND - DAY 105

The trinket stand is constructed of desert debris and is next to a lonely gas station.

Maria stands at the trinket stand examining the merchandise. There are rattlesnake rattles, snake skins, Death Valley Scottie books, stuffed toys, and a pile of uncracked egg-shaped stones. The stones are marked $5.

(CONTINUED)

105 CONTINUED: 105

Maria weighs one of the stones in her hand and hands the boy behind the counter a five-dollar bill.

She carries the stone toward the gas station.

CUT TO:

106 EXT. GAS STATION - DAY 106

BZ stands by the car while the boy pumps gas into it. Maria comes up with the stone. She points at a heavy tool.

MARIA
I need that.

BZ lifts it off the gas station tool rack and hands it to her. Maria sets the stone on the ground and taps it a few times.

The stone cracks. It is a geode, full of glittering crystal. Maria picks up the two crystalline halves. Her face is flushed with pleasure.

MARIA
Let's go.

CUT TO:

107 EXT. KATE'S HOSPITAL COTTAGE - DAY 107

BZ and Maria are walking from the car toward the cottage. Maria carries the two halves of the geode.

Kate and another child play in the sandbox, supervised by the orderly.

Maria stops suddenly. BZ turns back.

BZ
What's the matter?

Maria hands him the stones.

MARIA
You give them to her.
(a beat)
I can't talk to anyone.

BZ looks at Maria, and then he takes the stones. He walks toward the sandbox and kneels beside where Kate is playing.

107 CONTINUED: 107

Maria stands and watches. BZ at the sandbox is entirely from her POV.

BZ is very tender with Kate. Kate and the other child seem interested in the pretty crystals. The attendant is speaking to BZ. He is clearly explaining that the children may not have the stones. BZ says something to the orderly, seems to be suggesting a safe solution. The orderly shakes his head. BZ shows the children the crystals one last time and then stands up, holding them. Kate begins to cry.

Maria turns away and starts walking back to the car, as BZ comes toward her with the forbidden crystals.

CUT TO:

107A INT. MARIA'S BEVERLY HILLS HOUSE - NIGHT 107A

CLOSE ON BZ. FINGER WRITING "D-U-S-T" in a mote of dust on a table top in the living room.

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE LIVING ROOM

The house has obviously been vacant. Plants are wilted, cut flowers are dead, curtains are closed.

Maria draws the curtains. She and BZ do not speak for a moment. Maria starts pulling dead flowers from a vase. She does not know where to put them. BZ takes the dead flowers and throws them into a wastebasket.

BZ
You expecting somebody from House and Garden?

Maria is at a loss about what to do next. She does not want to be drawn into a conversation with BZ.

MARIA
The house is too big.

She turns on a lamp. The bulb flashes for a moment, then burns out. She looks away. BZ pulls the light chain off.

MARIA
(continued)
I could go to New York.

BZ
And see a few plays.

(CONTINUED)

107A CONTINUED: 107A

MARIA
And do some modeling.

BZ
For Avedon. And Irving Penn. The fall collection. They need a fresh face.

MARIA
It hasn't been that long.

BZ
Yes it has.

Maria exits the living room after a moment. BZ follows.

CUT TO:

107B INT. MARIA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT 107B

Maria opens the refrigerator door. She does not know what to do. She just does not want to be drawn into a conversation with BZ.

She sniffs at a container of milk that has soured, but then puts it back into the refrigerator.

BZ takes the milk carton and pours the milk down the drain.

BZ
You think you would be better off in New York. Or Silver Wells. Or Butte, Montana.

Maria touches the switch of the electric can opener. It buzzes for a moment making her start.

BZ
(continuing)
You think this is a terrible place, and you're mixed up with terrible people, and that's why you feel the way you do.

MARIA
I didn't say that.

Maria is evasive. She is trying to avoid the confrontation. Through the rest of the scene BZ is in psychic pursuit of Maria, trying to break through to her, drive his point home. He is the hound of heaven here.

(CONTINUED)

107B CONTINUED: 107B

The sequence ranges through the house in a series of cuts as Maria tries to elude the import of what BZ is saying. She picks up a cigarette and puts it down. She runs water to fill a glass and then forgets to drink the water. Not until the very end of the sequence does she admit that there has been a confrontation.

BZ
That's a shell game, thinking that way. Nothing outside you has got anything to do with how you feel.

MARIA
You don't know how I feel. Get a drink if you want.

Maria exits the kitchen.

CUT TO:

107C INT. WET BAR - NIGHT 107C

BZ
I know how you feel. You feel like I do.

Maria has opened the door into the backyard. She stands alone in the darkness. BZ follows her outside.

CUT TO:

107D EXT. MARIA'S BACKYARD - NIGHT 107D

BZ
All your life you've been looking for the answer. You keep going further and further, looking for the answer.

MARIA
(evasively)
I don't even know the question.

BZ
(not letting her get away with it)
I want to tell you something.

ANOTHER ANGLE - INSIDE THE HOUSE

Maria closes her eyes as if forced to listen. BZ's speech is very flat, measured, clearly enunciated.

(CONTINUED)

107D CONTINUED: 107D

BZ
(continuing)
My great-grandfather decided he was going to find the answer, and the first thing he did was, he built a railroad. After that he cornered copper once, for a week.

Maria is fiddling nervously with something on a table. BZ removes it from her hand, still talking.

BZ
(continuing)
Then I guess he found the answer, because for the last fifteen years of his life he spoke to no one. He stared at the ocean and every day he made an entry in a diary. And every day, after making his entry, he tore the page out and burned it.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Maria walks toward the kitchen. Halfway there she seems to forget where she was going, and why. BZ continues to dominate her, talking.

BZ
(continuing)
My grandfather was the first Jew in the Pacific Union Club and the absentee owner of, among other things, about 700 square miles of Sonoran desert. When he was 54 years old he had occasion, for the first time, to inspect his Sonoran holdings. He got off the train, looked at the desert, went to a room at the Hotel San Alberto in Hermosillo and shot himself.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Maria is in the kitchen turning on the tap. BZ turns it off.

BZ
(continuing)
In other words he found the answer too.

(CONTINUED)

107D CONTINUED: (2) 107D

Maria picks up a glass. She does not seem to know what to do with it. BZ fills it with water and hands it to her, still talking.

BZ
(continuing)
My father, as a very young man,
converted to Catholiciam and
studied to be a Jesuit priest.
When he was 22 years old he
visited Lourdes and lost his
faith... some years later marrying
Carlotta... and some years after
that dying of acute alcoholism at
a clinic in Lausanne.

A beat. Another movement.

BZ
(continuing)
I decided I was going to find the
answer, too, and I looked for it
by way of the ultimate fuck.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Another movement. Maria is now acknowledging that this is a confrontation. She stands with her back to BZ, her head down.

BZ
(continuing)
No more gender and no more ego.
The ten minutes that could take
you right on through, ~~to where~~
~~nobody's been.~~

After a beat.

BZ
(continuing)
What we all found... was
incontrovertible evidence...
that all of it means zero.

MARIA
I haven't found that.

BZ
You will.

MARIA
I don't even ^R want to be where
you are.

(CONTINUED)

107D CONTINUED: (3) 107D

BZ puts his arms around Maria's shoulders. She still faces away from him, her head down. He speaks to the back of her head. It is a moment of real pain and real love.

BZ

You're going to be, though.

You don't want to be but. you will be.

CUT TO:

108 EXT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL TENNIS COURTS - DAY 108

Maria sits alone on a bench watching BZ playing tennis with Nelson, the masseur we met at BZ's beach house previously. Maria is wearing a long white caftan and a straw hat against the sun. She is barefoot. She is perfectly motionless.

A man who looks like a television actor walks around the court and sits down next to Maria. He is wearing tennis whites and has a towel around his neck. His name is JOHNNY WATERS. Johnny rubs the towel back and forth across his neck and watches BZ and Nelson. Occasionally he looks at Maria.

Maria never looks at him. This plays for quite a while before Johnny Waters speaks.

JOHNNY WATERS

Why don't you dump the fags.

CUT TO:

109 EXT. BENEDICT CANYON - DAY 109

Maria and Johnny Waters driving up Benedict Canyon in his Ferrari. Maria is still barefoot and her hair blows in the wind, her straw hat on the floor.

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED: 109

Maria is sliding a new cassette into the tape recorder. In the same movement, she takes a joint from Johnny Waters.

The car turns off Benedict and up a twisting driveway toward a large house.

CUT TO:

110 INT. JOHNNY WATERS' KITCHEN - DAY 110

The kitchen is enormous, very modern, and spotless. There is every conceivable kind of electrical equipment.

Through a floor-to-ceiling window can be seen a pool and an equally spotless fake Japanese garden. Sunlight pours in.

There is a TV set built into a cabinet wall. A game show is on. Johnny Waters is one of the guest panelists on the game show.

Johnny Waters stands in front of the TV set watching himself intently.

A Japanese houseboy moves silently around the kitchen putting away clean dishes from the dishwasher.

Maria stands in front of the refrigerator, looking for something to eat.

Johnny Waters switches off the game show as it goes into its credit crawl. He looks at Maria. He comes over behind her and reaches around her neck and unfastens the tie-string of her caftan. He pulls it back slightly. The caftan falls around her shoulders.

JOHNNY WATERS
Let's fuck.

The houseboy seems not to notice either Johnny Waters' line which was delivered in a matter-of-fact conversational voice, or Maria's state of undress.

CUT TO:

111 INT. JOHNNY WATERS' BEDROOM - NIGHT 111

Maria and Johnny Waters on the bed.

JOHNNY WATERS
Don't move. I said don't move.

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED: 111

He reaches for an amyl nitrate popper, breaks it under his nose, breathes in and closes his eyes.

CLOSE ON MARIA'S FACE

She does not move as Johnny Waters comes.

JOHNNY WATERS
(continuing)
Terrific.

CUT TO:

112 INT. JOHNNY WATERS' DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT 112

Maria is pulling her caftan on, staring at a wall covered with tributes to Johnny Waters: publicity stills, framed letters with the White House Seal, inscribed photographs from politicians, several Emmy nominations.

Maria finishes dressing and walks into the bedroom.

CUT TO:

113 INT. JOHNNY WATERS' BEDROOM - NIGHT 113

Johnny Waters is asleep on the bed. Without looking at him, Maria picks up two cigarettes from the bed table and walks out. She is still barefoot.

113A. EXT - JW'S HOUSE - DRIVEAWAY.

CUT TO:

114 EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY 114

It is just dawn. Maria, alone and wearing the white caftan she had on at Johnny Waters' house, is just pulling Johnny Waters' Ferrari to a sharp stop at the side of the road. The headlights are still burning in the early desert light.

A Nevada Highway Patrol car pulls to a stop behind Maria.

Both Maria and the Highway Patrolman get out of their cars. Maria is still barefoot, and her hair is blown and tumbled.

Absurdly, she ties on her straw hat as the Patrolman approaches.

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED: 114

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN
License, please?

MARIA
Actually... I don't have it with me.

There is a beat while the Highway Patrolman considers the Ferrari and the disheveled barefoot Maria, standing on a desert road at six o'clock in the morning in a white caftan.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN
This your car?

MARIA
Actually... I borrowed it.

The Patrolman reaches into the Ferrari and takes the keys from the ignition. He walks back to the patrol car. His partner speaks into his radio. Maria stands on the road watching.

CUT TO:

115 EXT. TONOPAH JAIL - DAY 115

Maria is standing with the Highway Patrolman while another officer vacuums the floor and seats of the Ferrari. Dust blows around them. Maria's hands are handcuffed.

CUT TO:

116 INT. TONOPAH JAIL - DAY 116

An examining room. Maria takes off her dress and stands, naked, wrapped in a sheet. A MATRON inspects the linings of the dress, then motions for Maria to lie on the examining table. Maria lies down.

CLOSE ON THE MATRON'S FACE

as she begins a vaginal examination.

CUT TO:

117 INT. TONOPAH JAIL - NIGHT 117

Maria is in a cell. She is still barefoot and her hair has not been combed and her face is streaked with dust.

A police officer is unlocking the cell. Maria walks out and follows him past several empty cells, into a corridor. This section of corridor has three locked doors. At each door the officer presses a button. An answering BUZZ signals him that the door can now be opened.

Maria and the officer emerge finally into a small anteroom.

The Matron is there, transforming herself for the evening, her shift over. She applies eye makeup, puts on earrings, checks her stockings for runs.

The officer, meanwhile, is unlocking a safe and taking out Maria's few possessions, a comb, a key, a dollar bill, a packet of Beverly Hills Hotel matches, the straw hat. He spreads them on the table and checks them against a list as meticulously as if they were valuables.

OFFICER
One comb. One key. One dollar
U.S. currency.
(to the Matron)
What's on the agenda?

MATRON
Nothing special.

OFFICER
One... uh, book of matches. One
hat.

Maria picks up all the objects but the hat and drops them in her caftan pocket. Then she picks up the hat and waits.

The officer stands up and speaks to the Matron as he guides Maria toward the door.

OFFICER
(continuing)
I might lift a few with you later.

The officer and Maria walk through the door into the front-desk area.

BZ stands there, waiting. He is smoking a cigarette. Maria takes BZ's hand and they walk toward the door.

CUT TO:

118 EXT. TONOPAH JAIL - NIGHT 118

Maria and BZ walk outside. BZ puts his cigarette in Maria's mouth. Maria inhales, then retches, dry heaves, on the ground. BZ watches her. When she finally straightens up, he speaks. Helene watches from inside the car.

BZ
You want to know why Johnny Waters reported the car stolen!

MARIA
(wanly)
I suppose because he's a television personality, right?

BZ
You want to know what he told me?

MARIA
What did he tell you?

BZ
The cunt never told me who she was.

CUT TO:

119 EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT 119

BZ is driving. Helene sits in the front seat, talking. Maria leans against the window in the back seat.

HELENE
I must say you don't seem terrifically appreciative.

MARIA
(wearily)
I was not carrying, Helene. I mean, he can't have it both ways. His car, his seeds.

HELENE
Aren't you even interested in how much it cost?

MARIA
How much did it cost?

HELENE
The problem of course, was getting the possession off the record.

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED: 119

MARIA
How much?

HELENE
A sizeable campaign contribution.
(a beat)
Out of Carter's pocket.
(another beat)
Besides pledging Susannah to a Telethon. For Southern Nevada Cystic Fibrosis.

Maria is still leaning against the window.

MARIA
She can use the exposure.

CUT TO:

120 EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT 120

A SHOT from outside the car. The car travelling through the empty desert night. BZ is still driving. Helene is still in the front seat, Maria in the back.

Through the window we can see Helene pouring vodka into paper cups. She gives a paper cup to Maria and then to BZ. She is talking.

The car passes out of sight. HOLD on the empty road a second.

CUT TO:

121 EXT. ASH MEADOW - NIGHT 121

The car is driving up to Ash meadow, a Nevada desert roadhouse. There are cabins and trailers out in back of the central restaurant bungalow. Pulled up in front are some pickup trucks, a few old cars, and a sheriff's car. The sheriff's deputy, in uniform, stands on the porch of the restaurant laughing with one of the girls.

In the car Maria is licking the last vodka from the rim of her paper cup. Helene is still talking.

HELENE
Of course you're all right. You're perfectly fine. I mean there's nothing at all off about letting yourself get picked up on a tennis court at two o'clock in the afternoon.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

121 CONTINUED: 121

HELENE (cont'd)
By Johnny Waters. Nothing wrong there.
(to BZ)
I don't want to eat in a whorehouse.

BZ parks the car and turns off the ignition.

BZ
Pretend you're in Acapulco.

He opens his door and starts to get out.

CUT TO:

122 INT. ASH MEADOW - NIGHT 122

There are several girls, a few cowboys, and the sheriff's deputy in the bar.

Maria, BZ and Helene sit at a table. Helene is eating an enormous dinner. BZ has only a drink. Maria has a hamburger, untouched.

HELENE
I mean there's been something distinctly peculiar about your whole behavior pattern lately. I would almost go so far as to call it...

Helene takes a bite of steak and chews it. She is eating voraciously.

HELENE
(continuing)
... A very self-destructive personality structure.

BZ gets up, speaking to Helene as he does.

BZ
Don't go out on a limb.

BZ walks to the jukebox. Maria watches Helene eating.

Helene puts down her knife and fork and takes a compact from her bag. She studies her face in the mirror, checks her lip gloss. BZ is still at the jukebox. Finally:

HELENE
What kind of fuck is Johnny Waters?

CUT TO:

123 EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT 123

Maria and BZ in the front seat. Helene stares out the window in the back, not moving. She gives no indication that she is listening to BZ and Maria. The car radio plays softly. It is a long time before Maria speaks.

MARIA
I used to know somebody once, he used to... call me up in the middle of the night. And he'd say, how much do you want it, tell me what you'd do to get it from me.

The car drives on.

MARIA
(continuing;
finally)
I can't remember what I would have done to get it from any of them.

CUT TO:

124 EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT 124

Later. Helene dozes fitfully in the back seat.

BZ
You want to stay with Carter tonight?

MARIA
No.

BZ
You're going to have to see him tomorrow anyway.

MARIA
Then I'll see him tomorrow.

They drive a while in silence.

MARIA
(continuing)
I mean it doesn't matter.
(a beat)
Does it?

BZ
What does matter?

MARIA
I don't know.

BZ
You're getting there.

A pause.

(CONTINUED)

124 CONTINUED: 124

MARIA
Getting where?

Another pause.

BZ
Where I am.

Helene speaks abruptly from the back seat.

HELENE
Where you are is shit.

They drive on a moment in silence.

CUT TO:

125 EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT 125

A view of the car from outside. BZ at the wheel. Helene in the back. Maria asleep with her head on BZ's shoulder.

They pass the glowing ice machine on the Tecopa-Shoshone Highway, and BZ turns up toward his and Helene's rented house.

CUT TO:

126 EXT. BZ AND HELENE'S DESERT HOUSE - DAY 126

It is the earliest dawn. BZ, wearing different clothes, a work shirt and pants, sits on a chaise on the patio. He is staring at the horizon. There is the SOUND of morning birds.

Maria lies on the chaise asleep, her head in BZ's lap. She is wearing one of Helene's robes.

Maria stirs in her sleep. Without looking at her BZ pulls a blanket over her shoulders.

CUT TO:

127 INT. BZ AND HELENE'S DESERT HOUSE - DAY 127

Maria stands alone in the kitchen drinking a cup of coffee. She is still wearing Helene's robe. She is looking out the window down toward the road from the highway to the house.

BZ's car is coming up the road. BZ is driving. Carter is in the passenger seat.

Maria stirs her coffee and watches the car stop. Carter gets out and walks toward the house. BZ stays in the car. He is reading the trades.

CUT TO:

128 INT. BZ AND HELENE'S DESERT HOUSE - DAY 128

Carter walks in. They look at each other a moment.

CARTER
All right. You made you point.

MARIA
What's my point?

CARTER
No games, okay?

Maria says nothing.

CARTER
(continuing)
You proved it. You gave me the message. You can't be left alone.

Maria sips her coffee. She says nothing.

CARTER
(continuing)
Answer me.

MARIA
What did you ask?

Carter raises his hand as if to hit her, then stops himself. His voice when he speaks is weary.

CARTER
I've got to get back to the set. We'll drop you at the motel.

MARIA
I can stay here.

CARTER
That's a good idea. I come by every night to watch the dailies, we could kind of get to know each other. Maybe later we could start dating.
(a beat)
Let's go.

CUT TO:

129 EXT. MAIN STREET OF TECOPA - DAY 129

BZ's car driving along the main street toward the motel. BZ is driving. Carter sits in front. Maria, still in Helene's robe, is in back. No one speaks.

BZ stops in front of the motel. Carter gets out, and lets Maria out. He hands her a room key.

Maria takes the key. They look at each other a moment, then Maria walks toward the door of Carter's room.

CUT TO:

130 INT. CARTER'S ROOM - NIGHT 130

The scene plays between the two adjoining rooms. Maria is in a nightgown in the bedroom. She stands by a mirror brushing her hair.

In the mirror she can see Carter, in the other room. He is making notes as he listens to a tape of Susannah Wood giving reading after reading of a single line. It is apparently a tape he has made for his own use while he was working with her on a scene. His voice is heard on it occasionally, correcting or encouraging her.

SUSANNAH'S TAPED VOICE
'How does anybody end up on the desert? You drive here.'

CARTER'S TAPED VOICE
Harder.

SUSANNAH'S TAPED VOICE
'How does anybody end up on the desert? You drive here.'
(a different reading still)
'How does anybody end up -- '

CARTER'S TAPED VOICE
Not that hard.

SUSANNAH'S TAPED VOICE
'How does anybody end up on the desert? You drive here.'
(again)
'How does anybody end up on the -- '

Carter runs the machine back a bit and puts it on replay. Maria's voice cuts over it.

MARIA
When you were fucking Susannah...

Carter makes a note on the reading he likes and switches off the machine. As he does so he speaks.

CARTER
What about it?

(CONTINUED)

130 CONTINUED: 130

MARIA
I mean did you really like it?

Carter plays a fragment of the line again and switches it off. He speaks over Susannah's voice.

CARTER
Not particularly.

Maria brushes her hair a few more strokes.

MARIA
I wonder why not.

CUT TO:

131 INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY 131

Maria sits at the counter in the coffee shop turning the pages of a copy of Life. Patsy, the woman who runs the coffee shop, swats listlessly at flies. She and Maria seem to have established a kind of relationship.

PATSY
I'd sell you another iced coffee but Lee Ewing didn't bring the ice yet.

Maria shrugs. She does not lift her eyes from the copy of Life.

PATSY
(continuing)
He's got the school board today.

Maria speaks without interest, still turning pages.

MARIA
Where's the school?

PATSY
Up 147. About fifty miles.

MARIA
Not many children around.

PATSY
I used to have one.

Patsy is still listless, as if stating the obvious, the inevitable.

PATSY
(continuing)
She totalled my Chevy.

CUT TO:

132 EXT. TECOPA HOT SPRINGS BATHHOUSE - DAY 132

Faded American and California Republic flags whip in the wind over a corrugated iron shack. In front of the shack is a fenced parking area, surrounded by empty desert. The sign inside the fence reads:

TECOPA HOT SPRINGS
County of Inyo
2-Hr Parking Limit
Within Park.

Maria gets out of her car in the dusty parking area. She walks toward the corrugated iron shack. On the bathhouse door is a sign reading:

GIRLS
Bath House Hrs. 7AM-5PM.

Maria opens the door.

CUT TO:

133 INT. BATHHOUSE - DAY. 133

A dozen or so very old women, in various stages of undress, sit in and on the edge of a shallow concrete pool fed by a trickle of mineral water. The roof is open.

Maria does not seem startled by the scene: she has clearly been here before. The women are talking among themselves as Maria hangs up her bag and slips off her shoes.

1ST OLD WOMAN
She said it was benign.

2ND OLD WOMAN
You know it's not benign.

1ST OLD WOMAN
I know it and you know it. Not a lesion like that.

2ND OLD WOMAN
That's a malignant lesion.

The women stop talking as Maria sits on the edge of the pool and puts her feet in. They regard her with the distrust of the old for the younger, the resident for the stranger. Finally:

(CONTINUED)

133 CONTINUED: 133

2ND OLD WOMAN
(continuing)
Some people seem to think this is a foot bath.

CUT TO:

134 INT. RATTLER ROOM - NIGHT 134

The only bar in town. Like everything else in the town it is cinderblock, and pale green inside and out. There are overhead lights and concrete floor. Covering one wall is an immense crude mural of a dark-green snake.

Sitting in a booth are Carter, Helene, Maria and BZ. Helene is reading out loud to Carter from a piece about him in the New York Times Sunday theatrical section. Carter listens avidly. BZ and Maria are somewhat less absorbed.

HELENE
... 'This latest location may appear to be the California desert, but Carter Lang is filming, as always, somewhere in the geography of the human heart.'

Helene looks at Carter.

HELENE
(continuing)
This girl's really very acute.

BZ
She's a philosopher. A poetess.
(to Maria)
Have a pretzel.

Maria takes a pretzel. She is staring at the green snake on the wall. Carter glances at her, aware that she is probably unimpressed by the geography of the human heart.

HELENE
Listen to what she says about Maria. 'Tuesday morning. Lang's ex-wife is on the set. Easy with her, concerned, the paterfamilias not only of an immense professional family but of a personal family as well -- '

(CONTINUED)

134 CONTINUED: 134

Maria leans to speak to BZ. Her line overlaps Helene's.

MARIA
Actually that's not a rattlesnake
on the wall.

Helene breaks off, and glances at Carter.

MARIA
(continuing)
I mean they call this the Rattler
Room, and then they've got this
mural of... some kind of boa.

BZ
Who'd want to look at a rattlesnake?

Maria starts to laugh. She and BZ seem very close, very amused by each other.

Carter drums his fingers on the table a moment, then speaks to Helene.

CARTER
What does it say about my visual
concept.

CUT TO:

135 INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY 135

Maria sits looking at a newspaper and eating crushed ice from a glass. PATSY, the woman who runs the place, slams a cupboard door closed, takes off her apron and waits. Finally:

PATSY
I close up now for two hours before
supper. You'll notice it says that
on the door.

Maria looks up but does not move.

PATSY
(continuing)
I close at two, I open again at
four.
(a beat)
P.M.

MARIA
What do you do between two and
four?

(CONTINUED)

135 CONTINUED: 135

A beat.

PATSY
Look. Don't you have any hobbies
or anything?

CUT TO:

136 EXT. PATSY'S HOUSE - DAY 136

Patsy's house is a trailer set on a concrete foundation. The foundation extends in front of the trailer like a concrete lawn, and is bordered by a rail fence. Beyond the fence lie several hundred miles of drifting sand.

Patsy is sweeping sand off the concrete, a losing battle. New sand blows in as she sweeps, drifting around the fence posts.

Maria stands in the wind watching Patsy sweep.

PATSY
I mean I've got this place to take
care of. I've got the restaurant,
I've got my hobbies, I keep busy.

A pause.

MARIA
You know there's no use sweeping
this porch.

Patsy glances sharply at Maria and keeps on sweeping, now forming the sand into small piles, then edging the piles back toward the fence.

MARIA
(continuing)
I mean just look.

Patsy sweeps another few strokes.

PATSY
You ever make a decision?

MARIA
About what?

PATSY
I made my decision in '61 at a
meeting down to Barstow and I
never had one doubt since.

CUT TO:

137 EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY 137

Maria driving down the empty desert road, shooting at road signs as they flash by. This is the same scene as the first scene in the picture, but the angle is closer, lower.

The signs read: LOOSE GRAVEL.

And: CHARLES BROWN HIGHWAY.

And: WELCOME TO CALIFORNIA.

And: MAXIMUM SPEED LIMITS
Autos 65
All Traffis 65
Trucks 70

CUT TO:

138 EXT. THE LOCATION - DAY 138

Carter sits at the improvised picnic table eating a sandwich and opening his mail.

Maria, who has just brought him the mail, is cleaning her dark glasses with his paper napkin and his glass of water.

MARIA
When I went in to pick up the mail Lester told me this story. Three days ago, this old man at the trailer park --

Carter is opening the mail. He is not really listening to Maria.

CARTER
Who's this Lester?

BZ sits down at the table. Maria pushes a couple of letters toward him. He glances through them but does not seem interested enough to open them.

MARIA
Lester Ritchie. The deputy sheriff. Lester. The point is, this old man at the trailer park went for a walk three days ago. And before he went for the walk he told his wife he was going to ask God for a message.

Carter hands BZ a letter.

138 CONTINUED: 138

CARTER
Look at this.
(to Maria)
Just give me the punch line.

MARIA
There isn't any punch line. The old man never came back from his walk. And when Lester was out patrolling this morning he found the old man's body. Dead of snakebite.

CARTER
I'll say there isn't any punch line.

Maria leans toward him expectantly.

MARIA
He said he was going to talk to God.

Carter just looks at Maria. Maria shrugs, and gets up.

BZ
She wants to know if you think God answered.

CUT TO:

139 INT. BZ AND HELENE'S DESERT HOUSE - NIGHT 139

Carter, Susannah, and Helene are watching a blue movie, the star of which is Susannah.

Maria and BZ are not watching the movie. They sit in a corner of the room playing gin rummy.

HELENE
He looks terrific.

SUSANNAH
You could hire him for twenty dollars.
(a beat)
Probably less now.

CARTER
(to BZ)
Look at the film, BZ. Incredible, they've got opticals.

(CONTINUED)

139 CONTINUED: 139

BZ
I've seen the film, Carter.
(to Maria)
Gin.

MARIA
You've run it three times since dinner.

Susannah looks at Maria. Susannah does not like Maria.

SUSANNAH
Would you rather watch me live?

Maria looks at her and begins to deal another hand of gin.

CUT TO:

140 INT. CARTER'S ROOM - DAY 140

Maria sits on the floor, surrounded by police photographs of automobile accidents. She is studying them intently with a magnifying glass.

BZ pushes the door open and comes in. He stands over Maria a moment. She does not look up.

MARIA
Lester Ritchie's got a whole file of these. He lent them to me.

BZ
Where's Carter.

MARIA
(without looking up)
He wasn't here last night.
(a beat)
If you look at these close enough you can see things. Only through the glass.

BZ
Where was he.

MARIA
(without interest)
Maybe he was with Susannah.

Maria picks up a photograph and hands it to BZ, with the magnifying glass.

140 CONTINUED: 140

MARIA
(continuing)
Look at this one.

BZ
What am I looking for.

MARIA
You can see his false teeth on
the pavement. Only with the glass.

BZ looks.

MARIA
(continuing)
There's one here someplace where
you can just make out a snake. On
the embankment.

BZ hands her back the photograph and glass without comment. She resumes her study.

BZ
Does that matter to you?

MARIA
Does what matter to me?

BZ
Who anybody fucks.

MARIA
No.

A beat. Maria is engrossed.

BZ
Tell me what matters.

Maria puts down the glass.

MARIA
Nothing.

CUT TO:

141 ROAD SIGN - FULL SCREEN 141

This is one of the signs we have seen before:

LOOSE GRAVEL

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED: 141

A bullet hole appears in the sign as we watch.

Maria's voice is OVER:

MARIA (v.o.)
If Carter and Helene want to think it happened because I was insane, I say let them. I won't discuss it. I cut myself free. Never discuss. Cut. In that way I resemble the only man in Los Angeles County who does clean work.

CUT TO:

142 INT. CARTER'S ROOM - NIGHT 142

Maria stands by the motel-room window, looking out at nothing.

Carter sits at the kitchen table. He has a drink. It is very late.

CARTER
What do you want. I can't help you if you don't tell me what you want.

Maria does not move. She does not move throughout the scene.

MARIA
Nothing.

CARTER
I want to help you. Tell me what you feel.

MARIA
Nothing.

Carter stands up, his drink in his hand.

CARTER
Fuck it, then. Fuck it and fuck you. I'm up to here with you. I've had it with the circles under your eyes and the veins showing on your arms and the lines on your face and your fucking menopausal depression....

(CONTINUED)

142 CONTINUED: 142

MARIA
Don't say that word to me.

CARTER
Menopause. Old. You're going to get old.

Maria still does not turn from the window.

MARIA
Why do you say those things?

CARTER
To find out if you're alive.

CUT TO:

143 ROAD SIGN - FULL SCREEN 143

Another of the road signs we have seen before. Again, a bullet hole appears in it as we watch.

This sign reads:

WELCOME TO CALIFORNIA

Maria's voice is over.

MARIA (v.o.)
My father advised me that life was a crap game. That was one of the two lessons he taught me. The other was that overturning a rock was apt to reveal a rattlesnake. As lessons go those two seem to hold up, but not to apply.

CUT TO:

144 EXT. BZ AND HELENE'S DESERT HOUSE - DAY 144

It is late day, and very hot. Maria sits on the patio, wearing a bathing suit and working a crossword puzzle. She has obviously been there all afternoon: on the table beside her are several other crossword puzzles, magazines, an empty bottle of wine, a couple of glasses and a pile of tangerine peels.

BZ sits across from her. He is opening another bottle of wine. He has clearly been there a while too.

(CONTINUED)

144 CONTINUED: 144

Carter, Helene, and Susannah Wood have just arrived from the location. They are all enthusiasm, activity. Much unloading of paraphernalia, taking off of shoes, sun hats. Helene opens the ice bucket. Dialogue overlaps. BZ and Maria seem oblivious.

HELENE
Ice. We need ice.

CARTER
(to BZ)
We shot the last master after you left this afternoon. Three set-ups in the morning and we're home free. Fantastic.

BZ says nothing. He pours some wine into Maria's glass. Susannah lies down on a hammock.

SUSANNAH
I'm going to spend all next week in the Jacuzzi.

HELENE
Susannah was fabulous. Super-good.

Neither Maria nor BZ make any response to the others. Maria is still working the puzzle.

MARIA
(to BZ)
A nine-letter word for excellent.

BZ
Super-good.

HELENE
We're all going into Vegas to celebrate.

BZ
I'm not going.

HELENE
We're all going. It's all planned. Sylvie Roth's over, and Cassie and Leona and --

BZ
You go ahead. Maybe I'll drive Maria over later.

(CONTINUED)

144 CONTINUED: (2) 144

HELENE

Don't you want to see Leona's opening?

BZ

No.

Susannah giggles.

SUSANNAH

I saw the charts today. Leona's single stopped at 85.

Helene is still looking at BZ. The cords on her neck are tight.

HELENE

Exactly what do you want.

BZ looks at Helene. When he speaks his voice is pleasant.

BZ

Exactly nothing.

CLOSE ON MARIA

CLOSE ON BZ

He and Maria stare at each other with a look of total comprehension.

CUT TO:

145 THE COILS OF A RATTLESNAKE - FULL SCREEN 145

The coils FILL THE SCREEN, so immensely magnified that we do not know what they are. There is no head, no tail to identify this beige and brown pattern as a snake.

Maria's voice is over.

MARIA (v.o.)

When I first married Carter and my name began appearing in columns I received mail from mad people.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

145 CONTINUED: 145

MARIA (v.o. cont'd)
I am not much engaged by the problems of what you might call our day but I am burdened by the particular, the mad person who writes me a letter.

At this point the CAMERA MOVES BACK slightly, and the coils suddenly become identifiable. We still see no head, no tail. But we know that this is a snake. The coils begin to move, as if the snake is sliding out of its coil.

MARIA (v.o.)
(continuing)
It is no longer necessary for them even to write me. I know when someone is thinking of me. I have learned to deal with this.

CUT TO:

146 INT. CARTER'S ROOM - NIGHT 146

The room is dark. Maria, in a nightgown, is opening the front door.

BZ stands there. For the first time in the desert sequences he is wearing not work clothes but a blazer and a tie. He is carrying a bottle of vodka.

BZ
I came to see if you want to go into Vegas. With Carter and Helene and Susannah and Sylvie and Cassie and Leona and --

Maria sits down on the bed.

MARIA
You know I don't.

BZ sits in a chair across from her and loosens his tie. All the musculature seems gone from his face.

BZ
Look at me all duded up. Why are you in bed at nine o'clock?

MARIA
Why not.

(CONTINUED)

146 CONTINUED: 146

BZ
You're a good girl.

BZ reaches into his pocket and takes out a large prescription vial of capsules. He tosses the vial to Maria.

BZ
(continuing)
Animal, vegetable or mineral?

MARIA
Grain-and-a-half Seconal.

BZ
You want some?

Maria gets out of bed and hands him the vial. She looks at him.

MARIA
No.

Maria is standing next to BZ. He takes her hand.

BZ
You're still playing. Some day you'll wake up and you just won't feel like playing any more.

There is a beat.

BZ
(continuing)
Get me a glass of water.

Maria tightens her hold on his hand. She shakes her head.

BZ
(continuing)
Don't start faking me now.

MARIA
I won't fake you.

BZ stands up, and gets a glass of water. He pours some vodka into the water.

BZ
I know that. You think I'd be here if I didn't know that?

(CONTINUED)

MARIA
Why are you here.

BZ
Because you and I, we know something. We've been out there where nothing is. You know why.

Maria lies down on the bed again. BZ sits beside her, and begins swallowing the Seconal with the vodka and water.

MARIA
Lie down here. Just go to sleep.

BZ lies down on the bed beside Maria. They lie in silence for a while. When BZ speaks it is very slowly, drugged.

BZ
Tell me what you're going to do.

Maria takes his hand, and twines her fingers in his. Her voice is low.

MARIA
I'm going to get Kate. I'm going to live alone with Kate.
(a beat)
And I'm going to... do some canning.

She watches him, silent a moment.

BZ
Tell me what you're going to can.

MARIA
Apricot preserves. Sweet India relish. Pickled peaches.

BZ is beginning to slide away into sleep. Maria strokes his hand softly and continues, very low and slowly.

MARIA
(continuing)
Apple chutney. Pomegranate jelly. Piccalilli and spiced currants... and summer squash succotash.

(CONTINUED)

146 CONTINUED: (3) 146

Maria watches BZ a moment longer,takes his hand again and closes her eyes.

MARIA
(continuing)
I'm sorry.

BZ is almost gone.

BZ
(in what may be his last breath)
Hold on to me.

Maria holds tight to his hand. She stares into the void and in a voice so soft it can barely be heard she begins to sing.

MARIA
Fly the ocean in a silver plane
See the jungle when it's wet with rain...

CUT TO:

147 INT. CARTER'S ROOM - NIGHT 147

The room blazes with light. It is a melee. Carter and Helene are there. BZ lies dead on the bed. Helene is hysterical, shaking Maria and screaming.

Carter tries to pull Helene away from Maria. Dialogue overlaps.

CARTER
It's not her fault, Helene. She didn't know.

HELENE
She's insane. It happened because she's insane. I don't care if she knew or not.

MARIA
I knew. I did know.

CUT TO:

148 THE IMPRESSION LEFT IN SAND BY A COILED SNAKE - FULL SCREEN 148

The sand is empty. There is only the slight impression left by the coils, and a straighter impression leading away from the coil.

(CONTINUED)

148 CONTINUED: 148

The rattles of the snake are just vanishing out of FRAME.

Maria's voice is over.

MARIA (v.o.)
Carter called today, but I saw no point in talking to him. On the whole I talk to no one. I concentrate instead on the way light would strike filled Mason jars on a kitchen windowsill.

CUT TO:

149 EXT. ROSE GARDEN - DAY 149

The same circular rose garden we saw on page 1. There is no one at all in the rose garden. The stone Maria kicked over on page 2 lies kicked over, the damp earth beneath it the only uncultivated place in the garden, the only blemish.

Maria's voice is over.

MARIA (v.o.)
One thing in my defense, not that it matters: I know something Carter never knew, or Helene, or maybe you. I know what 'nothing' means, and keep on playing.

BZ (v.o.)
Why?

CUT TO:

150 MARIA - FULL FACE - CLOSEUP 150

Maria looks directly at the CAMERA.

MARIA
Why not.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END